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**WHAT DOES THE BREAD OF LIFE DISCOURSE REVEAL ABOUT THE
BENEFITS COMMUNICATED TO THE BELIEVER IN THE LORD'S SUPPER?**

by

ANDREA MILGATE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL
SEMINARY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, the author defines and explores the benefits received by the partaker of the Lord's Supper. Though many theologians have addressed this question throughout history, there remains a greater need to engage this question from the standpoint of the Bread of Life Discourse. With the intention of answering this question solely through Scriptural exegesis, the author chose to conduct an exegetical study of the Discourse as it is recorded in John 6:22-59. After examining the structure and historical context of the passage, she deemed it necessary to address whether the Discourse and the sacrament were related, and if so, the nature of that relationship. Through linguistic, structural, and historical considerations of John 6:22-59, she concluded that the passage at hand is indirectly related to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The Discourse and sacrament share key Christological teachings.

The scope of this project yielded a list of the various gifts Christ gives to the one who "comes and believes," or "partakes" of him, as well as a description of each. This study is a valuable resource for the Church as it provides a deeper understanding of the spiritual realities surrounding the Lord's Supper. The Supper is a binding, covenantal act believers perform, in which they receive visible, tangible signs and seals of Christ's benefits given to them.

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, B.J. Milgate, who tirelessly supported me as I pursued this course of study, and my family, who constantly encouraged me.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

sin	The Sinaitic Syriac (Old Syriac).
cur	The Curetonian Syriac (Old Syriac).
pesh	The Peshitta Syriac (the Syriac Vulgate).
W	The Washington (Freer) Codex; fourth or fifth century; in Washington D.C..
ω <i>plerique.</i> '	Used in Souter's <i>Nouum Testamentum Graece</i> to represent 'codices
Ⲙ	Codice Sinaiticus; fourth century; in London.
D	Codex Bezae; fifth or sixth century; at Cambridge.
B	Codex Vaticanus; fourth century; in London.
P ⁷⁵	An early third-century papyrus, at Geneva.
P ⁶⁶	A papyrus ca. A.D. 200; at Geneva.
NT	New Testament.
OT	Old Testament.
LXX	Septuagint.
Leg. All.	Legum Allegorie (Philo).
Mut.	De mutatione nominum (Philo).
Mek. Ex.	Mekilta on Exodus.

INTRODUCTION

Theologians have debated the doctrine of the Lord's Supper throughout the course of church history. The discussion has brought about key discrepancies among denominations, especially regarding the significance of the sacrament and what takes place during its celebration. Within the context of this discussion, Kevin DeYoung raises a concern: "I fear that in most churches the Lord's Supper is either celebrated so infrequently as to be forgotten or celebrated with such thoughtless monotony that churchgoers endure it rather than enjoy it."¹ Some Christians are cautious against celebrating the Lord's Supper "too frequently," fearful that repeated ritual will dull their emotional experience of the sacrament. This rationale, however, arises out of a memorial view of the Supper, in which its primary recognized purpose is to remember and appreciate Christ's propitiatory sacrifice. Though a deep appreciation and recollection of Christ's death on our behalf is an important facet of celebrating the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19), in his Bread of Life Discourse Jesus seems to hint at an additional spiritual significance of this meal.

Methodology

The genesis of this study lay in my curiosity around John Calvin's teaching on the Lord's Supper, and I purposed that my starting point would be Scripture. As I read Calvin's

¹ Kevin DeYoung, *The Good News We Almost Forgot: Rediscovering the Gospel in a 16th Century Catechism* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2010), 137-138.

treatment of the subject in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I noticed that he sourced John 6 repeatedly throughout the discussion.² Upon further study, I found that numerous theologians also believe John 6 relates to the Lord's Supper, but at varying degrees. Therefore, I first questioned the validity of exploring a correlation between the Lord's Supper and Jesus' Capernaum address. After first establishing the nature of the relationship between the Discourse and the sacrament, the goal of this paper was to exegete the John 6 Bread of Life Discourse in hopes of further understanding the benefits the Lord's Supper provides.

Following an annotated translation of the Discourse, my exegetical methodology moves from the general to the specific, investigating the historical context of the Discourse, and then examining its structure. While my aim in each of these two exercises was merely to conduct routine steps toward a careful exegesis of the passage, I found academic conversation around the historical context and structure of the Discourse to reveal the merit of reading the entire Discourse as a unified passage, written entirely by the original author. This discussion applies directly to an interpretation of the Discourse and to how or whether it instructs one on the Lord's Supper. The question of the Discourse's unity through verse 59 is key to understanding the authorial intent, especially regarding what some consider the "Eucharistic" section, verses 51c-58. Scholars such as Eduard Schweizer³ and Rudolph Bultmann see this section as contradictory to the earlier verses in the Discourse, and

² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 2:1363, 1365-7.

³ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981), 272.

identify it as Eucharistic propaganda later added by a redactor.⁴ However, I believe the content and structure of the Discourse reveals that to conceive of 6:22-59 as anything other than a unified passage would go against the grain of the passage itself.

In his 1965 study *Bread from Heaven*, Peder Borgen compares the literary structure of the Bread of Life Discourse to that of first-century homiletic midrash. Borgen shows quite convincingly through his descriptions of contemporary homiletic midrash structure, the presence of homiletic midrash elements throughout the Discourse,⁵ and the cohesive, systematic repetition of the vocabulary throughout Jesus' Capernaum address, that John 6:31b-59 is meant to be read as a single unit. In his essay *The Structure of John 6*,⁶ Johannes Beutler appeals to scenic divisions dictated by time and location to determine the overall framing and form of the passage. The coordinating shifts in characters, locale, and time-specific language throughout John 6 give weight to this approach. Favoring his reasoning for this method, I chose this method to frame the beginning of the passage for this study, starting my research at 6:22. In the *Historical Context* section of this thesis, I briefly establish the date, location, and provenance of John 6, arguing for its origin within a Palestinian Jewish context. I then survey the thought and religion in the first century Mediterranean region, and I engage some current discussion on the relationship between the sociological context of the Fourth Gospel and its purpose.

⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, ed. R. W. N. Hoare and J. K. Riches (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 291.

⁵ Peder Borgen, *Bread From Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 51.

⁶ Johannes S. J. Beutler, "The Structure of John 6," in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997).

Not wishing to conclude too hastily that John 6 speaks to the issue of the Lord's Supper, in the penultimate chapter of this thesis I explore the validity of consulting the Bread of Life Discourse as a resource in the study of the sacrament. I engage arguments against the unity of the Discourse and consider the historical situation of the Gospel as it relates to the practice of the Lord's Supper in the early church. I conclude that it is appropriate to include the Bread of Life Discourse in a discussion of the Lord's Supper since the intended audience of John 6 would have already been practicing the sacrament. Additionally, it is likely that Jesus' future institution of the Supper would not have escaped his awareness as he preached his John 6 homily. In the final chapter, I exegete the Bread of Life Discourse itself to explore what is promised to believers as they partake of Christ, and what implications this has for the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Literature Review

The resources I found most useful make linguistic and historical arguments with a level of specificity that aid exegetical engagement. I am thankful for the contributions of Rudolph Bultmann in his 1971 work, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* because of the exegetical nature of his arguments as he presents his case that a redactor added the last section of the Discourse. His concretely linguistic and historical discussion is highly conducive to Scriptural interaction. Maarten Menken's conversation on the same topic is illuminating, as he offers compelling arguments for a different view: that the ending section of the Discourse, 6:51c-58, is primarily Christological.⁷ This is essentially the view of

⁷ Maarten J. J. Menken, "John 6:51-58 Eucharist or Christology?" in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), 187-9.

D. A. Carson; the sacrament and the Discourse are connected, but indirectly, as they teach overlapping Christological concepts.⁸

I most often concur with scholars who treat the Discourse (as well as each section of the Discourse) as part of a cohesive whole. Some of the most frequently referenced scholars who fall into this category include: Craig Keener, Johannes Beutler, Leon Morris, D. A. Carson, Maarten Menken, Oscar Cullmann, Frederic Godet, and Peder Borgen.

Nomenclature

I used both the terms “Eucharist” and “Lord’s Supper” in this study to refer to the sacramental meal known as κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου in Acts 2:42.⁹ Both terms are found in Scripture. The former is a derivative of εὐχαριστέω which appears in numerous passages but especially in John 6:23 (εὐχαριστήσαντος). The term “Lord’s Supper” was first employed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:20.¹⁰ Many scholars I consulted in this study refer to the sacrament as the “Eucharist,” often employing the term in adjectival form when describing sacramental approaches to John 6. The authors of the Westminster Confession of Faith¹¹ and John Calvin,¹² however, favor the term “Lord’s Supper.” Calvin refers to the

⁸ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 280.

⁹ Oscar Cullmann, “The Meaning of the Lord’s Supper in Primitive Christianity,” in *Essays on the Lord’s Supper*, trans. J. G. Davies, 8-23 (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 9.

¹⁰ Eugene LaVerdiere, *The Eucharist in the New Testament and Early Church* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 2.

¹¹ “Westminster Confession of Faith,” accessed August 10, 2017, [pcaac.org,http://www.pcaac.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/11/WCFScriptureProofs.pdf](http://www.pcaac.org/wpcontent/uploads/2012/11/WCFScriptureProofs.pdf), 138.

¹² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1352

sacrament as “Eucharist” only when describing the parallel rite practiced in the Roman Catholic tradition.¹³ In Chapter 4 of this paper, as I focused on the question of the relationship between the Lord’s Supper and the Discourse, I sometimes referred to the sacrament as “Eucharist” in a general sense, intending no denominational or theological significance in my use of the term. However, the reader will notice that I used the term “Lord’s Supper” exclusively in chapter 6 as I discussed the main thesis of this research, which centers on the spiritual realities present in the Protestant sacrament of the Lord’s Supper.

¹³ Ibid., 1451.

CHAPTER 1 TRANSLATION OF JOHN 6:22-59

22 On the next day, the crowd, the ones staying¹ across the sea, had seen² that³ only one boat⁴ had been⁵ there, and that Jesus had not entered⁶ the boat together with his disciples, but his disciples had departed⁷ alone.

¹ Godet takes the participle ἑστηκώς to mean “The ones who stayed there yesterday evening and were staying there still.” Godet, 217. Such an interpretation is proper even though ἑστηκώς is a perfect participle, since it is stative. As Wallace writes, in the case of such verbs, the “acts slide into the results.” Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 580.

² Barrett notes that the clarity of this verse would be improved if the aorist εἶδον were read in the pluperfect sense; “they had seen,” and that even the participle ἰδών (Part. Ao A N M S), the reading supplied in W ω e cur, would be simpler to understand. Such a rendering would cause verse 23 to be considered a parenthesis. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 285. Beasley-Murray also supports reading 6:23 in this way. George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 90. Though the most ancient manuscripts contain εἶδον, Godet prefers ἰδών, since it is supported by fifteen later manuscripts, as well as the Curetonian Syriac. Godet, 216. However, Barrett contends that a participial reading is not justified, as it seems to be “...an attempt to solve a difficulty.” Barrett, 285. Barrett explains the general meaning of the narration: On the day of the feeding, the crowd had seen that there had only been one boat where they were on the eastern shore, and the disciples had departed without Jesus (made even more clear in the rendering of verse 17 in \aleph * D q cur which include $\epsilon\nu$). More boats had now come near to the location of the feeding miracle, possibly having been “blown out of the harbor, [possibly]...from Tiberius, on the west coast.” The crowd used these boats to travel to the opposite side of the sea to look for Jesus and the disciples at Capernaum. Barrett, 285.

³ ὅτι πλοῖάριον ἄλλο οὐκ ἦν ἐκεῖ εἰ μὴ ἓν is an indirect discourse clause, made explicit by its preceding “verb of perception,” εἶδον. In such clauses, ὅτι is translated “that.” Wallace, 456-8.

⁴ Köstenberger notes that John does not seem to be using πλοῖον and πλοῖάριον (diminutive of boat) to make a distinction between boat sizes. Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 206. Brown mentions that the texts vary between πλοῖον and πλοῖάριον and the use of the former shows the scribes’ efforts toward consistency. Some of the Western textual variants and Sinaiticus even add a phrase for explanation: “the one in which the disciples of Jesus had embarked.” Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, 2nd edition, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966), 257.

⁵ Since the imperfect verb tense is in an indirect discourse clause, it is appropriate to translate it into English using the past perfect. Wallace, 552.

⁶ See footnote 5.

⁷ See footnote 5.

23 Other¹ boats from Tiberius came near the place where they had eaten² the bread³ [after]⁴ the Lord had given thanks.⁵

24 So when the crowd then saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.

25 And when⁶ they found him on the other side of⁷ the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

26 Jesus answered them and said, “Truly, truly I say to you, you seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate from the loaves and were satisfied.”

⁸ ἄλλα is disregarded in the NIV and RSV, but rendered as “other” in ESV and NAS.

⁹ NAS and RSV render the aorist ἔφαγον “ate,” while the ESV and NIV supply the perfect form, “had eaten.” I chose to translate ἔφαγον in perfect form to maintain consistency with εὐχαριστήσαντος, which I also rendered in the perfect (see note 16).

¹⁰ Bernard notes that this is the only account of the feeding wherein the five loaves are referred to in singular form. Likewise, Eucharistic bread is always rendered in the singular (1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:27). Bernard’s view, partly because of this detail, is that 6:23 is a later interpolation. C.H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to St. John*, ed. A.H. McNeile, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1928), 1:189. However, in making this argument, Bernard does not take into account that every use of ἄρτος throughout the remainder of the chapter, except for ἄρτων in 6:26, is in singular form.

¹¹ Not present in the Greek text, but supplied in the ESV, KJV, NAS, NIV, and RSV due to the relationship of this participle to the preceding action.

¹² εὐχαριστήσαντος τοῦ κυρίου is not included in D a e sin cur. According to Bernard, this indicates that 6:23 is a gloss added later to the pericope. Bernard, 189. Köstenberger sees the participle as indicative of “hindsight from a post-Easter perspective,” but does not assume that verse 23 is later addition. Köstenberger, 206. Likewise, Beasley-Murray considers verse 23 to serve as a “parenthesis” by the author Beasley-Murray, 90. Moloney argues that inclusion of the phrase is appropriate. Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 206.

¹³ εὐρόντες is used as an adverbial participle in this instance, which merits supplying a temporal indicator. S. M. Baugh, *A New Testament Greek Primer* (Philipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 97.

¹⁴ Calvin clarifies this preposition by explaining that “on the other side of the sea” was a common expression to describe the relationship between Capernaum and Tiberius, though the two places were not directly across from one another. John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, trans. Rev. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1847), 1:239.

27 Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food which remains to eternal life which the Son of Man will give⁸ to you. For on him God the Father [has] set his seal.⁹

28 Then they said to him, “What shall we do, that we might¹⁰ be devoting ourselves to¹¹ the works¹² of God?”

29 Jesus answered and said to them, “This is the work¹³ of God; that you might believe¹⁴ in the one he has sent.

¹⁵ Brown (261) and Moloney (210) favor the future tense found in P⁷⁵. Brown considers the present tense of some textual variants to be a scribal effort to correspond with δίδωσιν of verse 32. Brown, 261.

¹⁶ ESV, NAS, NIV render ἐσφράγισεν in the perfect; “has set his seal.” Keener considers the aorist tense to indicate the writer’s reference to a specific act, which Keener hypothesizes is the descent of God’s spirit upon Jesus in 1:32-33. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, 2003) 1:677-8. Though the aorist form would not normally be used in an instance where the author sought to indicate a permanent state, Wallace refers to Fanning, who writes that when the aorist is used in these situations, “the entrance into the state” is being emphasized. Wallace, 503. Louw-Nida defines σφραγίζω, “to use a seal to close or make something secure, to seal, to put a seal on, to make secure.” Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), “σφραγίζω.” Though no preposition is present in the Greek text, “on him,” as is given in the ESV, NIV and RSV, is appropriate.

¹⁷ ἵνα ἐργαζώμεθα is a purpose ἵνα clause, which, according to Wallace, is the most frequently used ἵνα clause in the NT. This type of clause places the emphasis on intention of the verb, answering “why?” Wallace, 472. I feel that this nuance is most clearly expressed with the translation provided by the NAS translation; “that we might do,” though those provided by the ESV and RSV; “to be doing,” and the NIV; “to do” are also appropriate.

¹⁸ Moloney argues that there is nuanced difference between ἐργάζεσθε in verse 27 and ἐργαζώμεθα in verse 28. While in verse 27, Jesus is referring to “work” in a more general sense, the mention of τὰ ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ alludes to the concept of the rabbinic teaching of devotion to the law of God. This is reflected more accurately by rendering ἐργαζώμεθα “devoting ourselves to.” Moloney, 211. Likewise, Friberg indicates that ἐργαζώμεθα, when used transitively, is accurately translated “do, accomplish, perform, carry out.” Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, Neva F. Miller, *Friberg Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), “ἐργάζομαι.”

¹⁹ Keener cross-references Exodus 18:20 wherein “work” (LXX translates the singular מְעַשֶׂה in the plural, ἔργα) is to follow the statutes, laws and halakah. ἔργα in John 6:28 is similarly in plural form. Keener contends that here Jesus contrasts these “works” with “his works”, cf. Revelation 2:26. Keener, 677. Köstenberger, however, argues that the phrase “works of God” frequently points to works performed by God; not those he commands. Köstenberger, 208. Keener’s understanding, however, is more fitting in this context.

²⁰ Barrett notes the significance that “...Only one ‘work’ is required by God.” This contrasts with verse 28; “works.” Barrett, 287.

²¹ Barrett considers the present tense of πιστεύητε, which he designates as “continuous,” to specify a life lived out of faith, as opposed to a single act of faith. Barrett, 287.

30 Then they said to him, “What sign then do you do, that we might see and believe you? What work do you perform?”

31 Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, as it is written, “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”

32 Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true[est]¹⁵ bread from heaven.

33 For the bread of God is the one who comes down from heaven and who gives life to the world.

34 Then they said to him, “Lord, give us the bread always.”

²² Barrett explains that the original bread from heaven, the manna provided to Moses and the Israelites, was invaluable. However, it was subject to decay, and hours after eating it, the Israelites would hunger again. In the same way, the Torah, regarded in the rabbinic tradition as “food,” ultimately pointed to Christ, the truest substance. Barrett, 290.

35 Jesus said to them, “I am¹⁶ the bread of¹⁷ life.”¹⁸ He who comes to me¹⁹ shall [surely] not²⁰ hunger²¹, and the one who believes²² in me shall [surely] not ever thirst.²³

²³ This form of the ἐγὼ εἰμι clause is favored by John. When followed by a predicate [noun] it describes, not Jesus’ ontology, but his role in the relationship between himself and man. In this statement Jesus reveals his nourishing role in his relationship to man rather than his nature. Brown, 269. Barrett writes that in the Old Testament, ἐγὼ εἰμι is used in divine statements of self-revelation and imperatives (i.e. Exodus 3:6, 3:14, Isaiah 51:12) Barrett, 292. Dodd also notes that divine revelation is expressed through the formula ἐγὼ εἰμι in not only John, but Isaiah; אֲנִי אֱלֹהִים. C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1953), 168.

²⁴ Jesus is not referring to life in general, but “spiritual, everlasting life.” William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 233. This qualitative genitive includes an attributive functioning as an adjective, in the same manner as the Hebrew construct phrase. Use of the qualitative genitive as a predicate adjective is congruent with classical Greek grammar, though seen rarely in Classical Greek. Frederick Blass, Albert Debrunner, Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), § 165.

²⁵ Brown interprets this phrase as the bread which gives life. Brown, 269. Bernard notes that this statement is congruous with verse 51 “the living bread,” because bread which gives life would necessarily possess life in itself; “...life can only proceed from life...” Bernard, 198. Barrett: “Jesus is the means by which men have eternal life, but the means is personal, and is to be appropriated personally, not mechanically.” Barrett, 291. The idea of heavenly bread comes out of the Old Testament and Jewish teachings, but is also found in Greek thought (such as Homer) and Eastern teachings. Barrett, 293.

²⁶ This expression occurs numerous times in the discourse (verses 37, 34, 45). Jesus teaches that bread is provided through faith, rather than faith being the product of the sign of bread, as the crowd supposed. Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 229.

²⁷ As a means of emphasis, Jesus uses the double negative οὐ μὴ twice in this verse. The second time it is even more forceful, as it is followed by πῶποτε. Köstenberger, 210-211.

²⁸ With his promise to forever satisfy the hunger and thirst of those who come to him, Jesus is claiming to fulfill the messianic prophecies of the OT found in Isaiah 49:10 and 55:1. The OT expectation was for true Wisdom, which is what Jesus is claiming to be. Köstenberger, 210. Kysar identifies “hunger” and “thirst” with absence of the most fundamental need of humanity; communion with God. Robert Kysar, *John*, Ausburg Commentary on the New Testament (Minneapolis: Ausburg Publishing House, 1986), 101-2. Brown highlights the similarity between these statements and those in the Sirach: “He who eats of me [Wisdom] will hunger still; he who drinks of me will thirst for more.” Though the two seem to contradict each other at first, they communicate similar ideas. According to Sirach, men will develop an insatiable hunger for Wisdom once they have tasted it. Jesus says that his revelation will satisfy men’s hunger and quench their thirst; they will never long for anything else. Brown, 269.

²⁹ Hendriksen considers *coming* and *believing* are synonymous. William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 1:233.

³⁰ Köstenberger notes the change in verb form from aorist subjunctive in πεινάσῃ to indicative in διψήσῃ. Köstenberger, 211. Barrett sees it as a mistake by the author. Barrett, 293. Jesus speaks about thirst alongside hunger; some consider this reference to be out of place. Sanders suggests that John’s source may not have connected this discourse with the pericope of the Feeding as closely as it is in the Fourth Gospel. J. N. Sanders, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, Harper New Testament Commentaries,

36 But I said [to] you that²⁴ you have both²⁵ seen me²⁶ and yet you do not believe.

37 All that²⁷ the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means²⁸ throw out.²⁹

38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my own³⁰ will, but the will of the one who sent me.)

ed. B. A. Mastin (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 189. Ridderbos writes that the satisfaction of hunger and thirst are often mentioned side by side as illustrations of salvation and its accomplishment (cf. Proverbs 9:5; Isaiah 55:1 ff.). Ridderbos, 229. This language is also used by the personification of Wisdom in Sirach 24:19-21. The difference between Jesus and Wisdom is that those who come to eat and drink from Wisdom will still hunger and thirst, but those who come to Jesus will not hunger and thirst any longer. Keener, 683.

³¹ John rarely follows εἶπεν with a ὅτι clause to introduce direct speech of Christ. John does, however, frequently begin Jesus' rephrasing of his previous words with a ὅτι clause. There is no way of knowing whether this is introducing direct or reported speech. Edwin A. Abbott, *Johannine Grammar* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1906), § 289-91. It is also unclear whether the statement to which Jesus is referring is recorded in the Fourth Gospel (Köstenberger, 211), though Kysar asserts that 6:26 is a plausible referent. Robert Kysar, *John*, Ausburg Commentary on the New Testament, Minneapolis: Ausburg Publishing House, 1986, 102.

³² Abbott believes that Christ used the Aramaic ܐܢܝ in this statement, which can mean either "and" or "yet." In his Greek translation of Jesus' statement, John used καὶ in an antithetical fashion, which is not typical of Greek, to emphasize the paradox Jesus was conveying. Abbott § 2145.

³³ Barrett writes that in the clause καὶ ἑώρακάτέ με, με should not be included, as it is not in \aleph a b e sin cur. The concept presented by this clause clarifies a connection with verse 26. Barrett, 293. Jesus recognizes that it is actually his signs, not Jesus himself, that the crowd has "seen." Sanders, 190. Rather than seeing what the signs represent, they focus on the signs themselves. D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 290. Brown, however, observes that the two Bodmer papyri give more weighty evidence for the inclusion of "me," suggesting that the lack of this predicate pronoun may be due to a scribal desire to leave 6:36 more ambiguous. Brown, 270.

³⁴ Barrett writes that the neuter πᾶν ὃ serves to highlight the collective sense of all believers. Barrett, 294. Moloney notes that the gender could indicate "all things," in the same way that Colossians and Ephesians speak of the reconciliation of "all creation" to Jesus. However, according to Moloney, this would not be fitting in the discussion at hand. Moloney, 216.

³⁵ The double negative (οὐ μὴ), combined with the subjunctive ἐκβάλω indicates emphatic negation. Wallace, 468.

³⁶ Sanders writes that ἐκβάλω in this case would be rendered literally, "throw out." Sanders, 189. Ridderbos interprets the meaning of this to be "not recognize as his own," or "eject from his fellowship." Ridderbos, 231. Barrett contends that \aleph D a b e sin cur incorrectly exclude ἔξω. Barrett, 294.

³⁷ Found in ESV, NAS, RSV. NIV does not include this term, but still retains the possessive sense of τὸ θέλημα τὸ ἐμὸν.

39 And this is the will of Him who sent me, in order that I should lose nothing out of all he has given to me, but raise it³¹ up on the last day.

40 For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks³² on the Son and believes in him might have eternal life, and I will raise him up [on] the last day.

41 Then the Jews murmured at him because he said “I am the bread that came down from heaven.”

42 And they said, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is he now saying ‘I have come down from heaven?’”³³

43 Jesus answered and said to them, “Do not murmur among yourselves.”

44 No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.

45 It has been written³⁴ in the prophets, “And they all shall be taught by God.”³⁵ Everyone who has³⁶ heard the Father and has learned from him comes to me.

46 Not that anyone has seen the Father except the one that is from God; he has seen the Father.

47 Truly, truly, I say to you, He who believes has eternal life.

³⁸ Though the NIV translates αὐτὸ in plural form, I find the ESV, NAS, and RSV readings to better reflect the singular form in the Greek text. The singular form also highlights the corporate nature of πᾶν ὃ δέδωκέν.

³⁹ The meaning of the term θεωρῶν, in this context, is dependent upon the later καὶ πιστεύων εἰς αὐτόν. Here θεωρῶν does not merely indicate visual awareness (as in earlier Greek), but placing one’s faith in Jesus. Carson, 292.

⁴⁰ The order of terms is reversed (with ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ now placed first) for emphasis. Bernard, 203.

⁴¹ The combination of εἰμί with a perfect participle, ἔστιν γεγραμμένον, is a periphrastic perfect. Wallace, 648.

⁴² Beutler writes that this quote appears to come from Isa. 54:13 (LXX), but may also be a reference to Jer. 31[38]:31-34 due to its content, not wording. Johannes S.J. Beutler, “The Use of ‘Scripture’ in the Gospel of John,” in *Exploring the Gospel of John*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and C. Clifton Black (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 149.

⁴³ An aorist participle, such as ἀκούσας and μαθὼν, typically indicates an antecedent action to the controlling verb. Wallace, 614. Therefore, the rendering given by ESV, NAS, and RSV; “has heard and learned” is likely more accurate than that of the NIV, “hears and learns.”

48 I am the bread of life.

49 Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness and they died.

50 This is the bread which comes down from heaven in order that anyone may eat of it and not die.

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats³⁷ of this bread, he will live forever, and the bread which I will give, my flesh, is on behalf of the [life of the world].

52 Then the Jews quarreled intensely with one another saying, “How is he able to give us [his]³⁸ flesh to eat?”

53 Then Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves.

54 The one who eats³⁹ my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.

⁴⁴ Leon Morris believes that the use of the aorist tense of φάγη makes it less likely that this is a Eucharistic allusion. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 331. This is probably because of what A. T. Robertson calls the punctiliar rather than durative nature of the aorist tense. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: The University Press, 1919), 848. Also Abbott, 381. However, I question the assumption that the Evangelist’s use of the aorist tense here indicates a punctiliar distinction. Rather, I agree with Frank Stagg, who argues against assigning such a nuance to the aorist tense: “...the ‘punctiliar’ idea belongs to the writer’s manner of presentation and not necessarily to the action itself.” Frank Stagg, “The Abused Aorist,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 9 (1972): 222. There are multiple instances in the Fourth Gospel where the combination of ἐάν with an aorist subjunctive does not result in punctiliar force, i.e. John 3:12; 8:31; 8:54; 9:22; 11:57; 15:7.

⁴⁵ αὐτοῦ follows σάρκα in P⁶⁶ B lat sy. Barrett considers the omission of the possessive pronoun more appropriate because of the allusion to the Israelites’ grumbling in Numbers 11:4. Barrett, 298. However, “his” is included in the ESV, NAS, RSV and NIV.

⁴⁶ “strictly *crunch*; literally of animals gnaw, nibble; of human beings *eat, take food, partake of* (a meal).” Friberg, “τρώγω.” Barrett notes a distinction that this verb was used during the time Homer was writing in reference to eating done by specifically herbivorous animals. During the time of Herodotus and onward it was used to denote eating done by humans. Barrett considers it unlikely that John ascribed special meaning to this term. Barrett, 299. Keener writes that τρώγων, a present active participle, is likely synonymous with “continue to subsist,” or “abide,” (c.f. 6:56) and is therefore language John uses to speak of perseverance (6:27; 8:31; 15:4-7). This is further suggested by discussion in verse 57 of Jesus’ reliance upon the Father and its implications for the disciples’ reliance upon Christ. Keener, 691.

55 For my flesh is food indeed⁴⁰ and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains⁴¹ in me and I in him.

57 Just as the living Father sent me, and I live through the Father, so the one who eats⁴² me, that one will live because of me.

58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the bread the fathers ate and died. He that eats this bread will live forever.”

59 These things he said in [the] synagogue, as he taught⁴³ at Capernaum.

⁴⁷ ἀληθής in John is used to refer to “...opinions and statements, and those who hold or make them.” Barrett, 160. The use of ἀληθής (supported in P⁶⁶ P⁷⁵ B W) to modify nouns (here βρωσῖς and πόσις) is inconsistent with John’s usual employment of the term. Barrett, 299. Carson holds a similar view: To modify “symbolic predicates” John would typically use ἀληθινὸν rather than ἀληθής. Carson, 299. ✠ * D Q ω it vg sin cur pesh support use of the adverbial ἀληθως which is consistent with John’s overall style. Barrett, 299. Keener considers ἀληθής to be accurate, stating that its uncommon double usage is due to hyperbaton literary technique, and that the adjective indicates genuineness; Jesus is “true food” in the same way he is the “true” light in 1:9, the “true” vine in 15:1, the “true” bread in 6:32. Ridderbos translates the term as an adverb; “my flesh is food indeed.” Ridderbos, 243. This is also Calvin’s rendering. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 2:1960, 1363. In my opinion, the readings “true food,” and “true drink” most clearly express this concept.

⁴⁸ “to remain in the same place over a period of time.” Louw-Nida, “μένω.” “Rooted in; knit together by the spirit they have received from him.” Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (Orlando: International Bible Translators, Inc., 1998), “μένω.”

⁴⁹ Ridderbos highlights John’s use of eating as a metaphor for coming and believing (verses 35, 47), and does not consider it a sacramental reference. Ridderbos, 235.

⁵⁰ The ESV, RSV and NAS read “as he taught...” I find this rendering to be helpful since it explicitly portrays the contemporaneous nature of διδάσκων with εἶπεν. Wallace mentions that the present participle typically indicates action simultaneous to the main verb. Wallace, 625.

CHAPTER 2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL

In this chapter, we shall consider issues surrounding the date of the Fourth Gospel's composition, provenance, and audience. We shall also explore the historical context of the Gospel, and interact with some contemporary academic conversations regarding this subject.

Date

The date of the Fourth Gospel's composition is a debated issue. Some argue that the Evangelist's silence regarding the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 proves that he wrote prior to this event, but this argument from silence is less weighty than evidences of a later date.¹ Even if he penned the Gospel several years after the destruction of the Temple, his taciturnity in regards to the destruction would not be unreasonable.² John 21:18-19 indicates that Peter's martyrdom (A.D. 64 or 65) had already taken place at the time of the Gospel's composition.³

¹ D.A. Carson and Douglas Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 264.

² William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 1:30.

³ Carson, 264.

Most proposals for the Fourth Gospel's date of completion have ranged from A.D. 70 to nearly the end of the second century.⁴ Some scholars argue that the Gospel's linguistic and conceptual similarity to numerous contemporary religions indicate that it was developed over an extensive time period. For this reason, they assign the Gospel an even later date. However, the contents of the Dead Sea Scrolls provide evidence that a wide variety of worldviews, including Hellenistic and Gnostic, were present in Palestinian culture prior to the time of Christ.⁵ Two discoveries in the first half of the twentieth century place the Gospel toward the earlier end of the dating spectrum. In 1925 the British Museum obtained three Egyptian papyrus leaves, dated prior to A.D. 150, which came to be known collectively as "Egerton Papyrus 2." These fragments contain paraphrased portions of the Fourth Gospel: John 5:39, 45; 9:29, 7:30, and 10:39.⁶ The discovery of P⁵² in 1935 reinforced the Gospel's origin as 25 years earlier than it had been considered before its finding.⁷ This fragment is dated to A.D. 130 and carries a small section of John 18.⁸ Though P⁵² dates well into the second century, it, like the Egerton Papyrus, was located far enough from the most widely accepted sites of the Gospel's origin (Alexandria,⁹ Antioch,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 26.

⁶ R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. John*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976), 22-23.

⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, 2003), 1:141.

⁸ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 24.

⁹ Carson mentions Alexandria as one of the most commonly recognized origin locations, due to the Gospel's supposed similarities to Philo's writings. However, Carson considers these similarities to be

Palestine, and Ephesus)¹⁰ to require an estimate of nearly 30 years from completion to distribution in this remote location.¹¹ The same allowance must be made for the dating of Egerton Papyrus 2.¹²

Keener accepts a date in the late 90s, citing the evidence provided by the aforementioned papyri as well as the author's allusions to the intense conflict between Jewish Christians and leaders of the Jewish community.¹³ Such references are especially apparent in 1:19; 2:13-22; 9:22; 11:45-53; 12:42; 16:2; 18:28-19:16; 19:17-22, and 20:19.¹⁴ Moloney also finds that the Evangelist's testimony of the Christians' expulsion from the synagogue in 9:22, 12:42 and 16:2 support this date.¹⁵ Because of these factors, I agree with Keener and Moloney that the Gospel was composed in the last decade of the first century.

exaggerated, and he is not willing assume that literary influence would have necessarily been so localized. Carson, 86.

¹⁰ Ibid, 86.

¹¹ Keener, 141.

¹² Tasker, 23.

¹³ Keener, 145.

¹⁴ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 9.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2-3.

Provenance and Audience

Most scholars accept one of four places as the origin for the Gospel: Alexandria, Antioch, Palestine, and Ephesus,¹⁶ with the majority agreeing on Ephesus.¹⁷ Bultmann subscribes to a Syrian origin for the Gospel because of its Semitic language and its parallels to not only Gnostic revelation discourses, but also the letters of Ignatius and the *Odes of Solomon*.¹⁸ I acknowledge, however, that Bultmann was particularly reliant on his presupposition that the Fourth Gospel was penned in the context of Gnosticism, a religion which dates no earlier than the second century. Though allowing for the possibility that John wrote most of the Gospel earlier in another location, and only edited and allowed it to circulate in Ephesus,¹⁹ Keener's main argument regarding the Fourth Gospel's origin comes from the testimonies of church history; Irenaeus testified that the apostle John had written in Ephesus, Clement claimed that John had lived in Ephesus, and Polycrates mentioned that John's tomb was located there.²⁰ Köstenberger also argues for an origin in Ephesus because not only Irenaeus, but also Eusebius testifies to John's Ephesian residence in *Historia* 3.24.7.²¹ Ephesus' close proximity to the focal point of the Montanist movement, Phrygia, as well as the Montanists' use of the Gospel at an early date also

¹⁶ Carson, *Introduction*, 254.

¹⁷ Carson, *Gospel*, 86.

¹⁸ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray, ed. R.W.N. Hoare and J.K. Riches (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 12.

¹⁹ Keener, 147.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 146-7.

²¹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 8.

suggest this location.²² All of this extrabiblical literary evidence supports my conclusion that the Evangelist penned the Fourth Gospel in Ephesus.

Keener believes the audience of John's Gospel had Jewish roots largely because the author centered the structure of the Gospel on Judaism, and built the chronological flow of the narrative around Jewish festivals.²³ Keener also highlights the Evangelist's mention of several Jewish customs: the use of purification vessels (2:6), Jesus' traveling to Jerusalem at Passover (2:13, 23), the controversy over circumcising on the Sabbath (7:22-23), and Jewish customs regarding testimonies (8:13-18).²⁴ John makes numerous Christological references which would have been familiar to a Jewish audience: Jesus as the "paschal lamb" (1:29, 36; 19:36), Jesus as king of Israel, allusion to Jacob's ladder (1:51), and the Bread from Heaven (6:35).²⁵ In light of these factors, Keener believes the audience to be the Jews of the Diaspora.²⁶ This intended audience would explain why, as Moloney writes, the Gospel has its foundation in Jewish culture, but is composed in a manner that speaks intentionally to the "wider world," distinguishing it from the Synoptic Gospels.²⁷

²² Morris, 54.

²³ Keener, 171.

²⁴ Ibid., 174.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 180.

²⁷ Moloney, 3.

Despite the Gospel's appropriateness for Jewish readers, Keener believes the Evangelist composed it in a non-Palestinian setting to a partially non-Palestinian audience. As early as the First Temple period, Jerusalem was a center of pilgrimage²⁸ and remained as such during the Second Temple period, with celebrations of Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles.²⁹ It is likely that John and other members of the Palestinian community had dispersed during the Roman War of A.D. 66-70,³⁰ a migration which is consistent with the claims made by Eusebius in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3:31 that John, "who reclined upon the bosom of the Lord" was buried at Ephesus, along with the daughters of Philip.³¹

Keener postulates that some of the non-Palestinian Diaspora Jews may have been familiar with certain Palestinian geographic descriptions because of the pilgrimages they had taken to Palestine.³² Keener considers it possible that the intended audience was located in Syria-Palestine, since the Evangelist does presuppose his readers' knowledge of some Palestinian locations, such as Bethany in Perea (1:28) and Aion near Salem (3:23).³³

²⁸ George W.E. Nickelsburg and Michael E. Stone, *Early Judaism: Text and Documents on Faith and Piety*, rev. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 66.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁰ Keener, 147.

³¹ Eusebius Pamphilus, *The Church History of Eusebius* 3.31.3 (NPNF² 1:162), accessed August 3, 2015, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf201.iii.viii.xxxi.html>.

³² Keener, 144.

³³ *Ibid.*

On the other hand, the intended reader's knowledge of Palestinian locations seems mostly limited to sites mentioned in the Synoptics.³⁴

Raymond Brown notices elements in the Fourth Gospel which indicate that non-Palestinians and Gentiles were among the intended audience. The Evangelist provides explanations for Hebrew and Aramaic words he uses, such as "Messiah," "Rabbi" and, "Siloam," supplying didactic comments. In John 4:9 the author explains the relationship between Samaritans and Jews (which would not have been necessary for Palestinian readers).³⁵ The clarifications about Jewish customs in 2:6 and 19:40 seem to show the author's aim at communicating with Gentiles,³⁶ and the Hellenistic parallels present in the Gospel render it likely that John's audience included native Greek-speakers.³⁷ My conclusion is that the intended audience of the Fourth Gospel was a mixture of the Diaspora Jews, including Palestinians, and Gentiles. It is probable that the Palestinians among these readers would have taught the others about geographical references in the Gospel which would have been unknown to non-Palestinians.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid., 143.

³⁵ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981), 73.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Keener, 175.

³⁸ Ibid.

First-Century Religion and Thought in the Mediterranean Region

Due to the ease of travel throughout the Roman Empire, ideas in the Mediterranean world were transmitted rapidly over great distances in the first and second century.³⁹ Eastern religious ideas gained influence in the Mediterranean area and were incorporated into various worldviews.⁴⁰ Gnosticism, which encompassed an assortment of Jewish, Christian and Platonic teachings,⁴¹ grew out of Neoplatonism, drawing a clear distinction between the material and spiritual. Gnosticism promoted the idea of a “gnostic-redeemer” who liberated the “truly spiritual” by imparting to them the knowledge of their genuine identity. According to this belief system, those who were of a truly material nature were not able to accept the message of the gnostic redeemer.⁴²

Rudolph Bultmann champions the view that Gnosticism heavily influenced the ideas and language in the Fourth Gospel. Noting similarities between Gnosticism and the Gospel, Bultmann concludes that a major goal of the Evangelist was to communicate effectively with Gnostic believers.⁴³ Irenaeus also postulated that the Gospel was written in efforts to debate with members of this religion.⁴⁴ Irenaeus expressed his supposition in *Against Heresies*:

³⁹ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 27

⁴⁰ Barrett, 27.

⁴¹ Keener, 167.

⁴² Carson, *Gospel*, 25.

⁴³ Bultmann, 8.

⁴⁴ Brown, 53.

John, the disciple of the Lord, preaches this faith, and seeks, by the proclamation of the Gospel, to remove that error which by Cerinthus had been disseminated among men, and a long time previously by those termed Nicolaitans, who are an offset of that knowledge falsely so called, that he might confound them, and persuade them that there is but one God, who made all things by His Word...⁴⁵

In support of a similar conclusion, Bultmann cites conceptual and linguistic parallels between the Gospel and Gnosticism: they both portray the world in terms of light and dark, and distinguish between those who are able to attain a certain spiritual knowledge and those who are not.⁴⁶ Bultmann also notes specific language parallels among Johannine and Gnostic documents, such as μένουσαν εἰς ζῶην αἰώνιον in John 6:27, with similar phrases in *Hermetica* and *Acts of Thomas*. which describe the shared concepts of Christ, his followers, and characteristics of heavenly things.⁴⁷ However, with the Gospel dating c. 90-100, as I believe it does, it is not possible that the Evangelist would have been influenced by or interacted with second-century Gnosticism. Keener essentially shares this view, noting that the second-century church likely read their conflicts with Gnosticism into the Gospel.⁴⁸

Further study into the linguistics of the Gospel and contemporary documents supports a Biblical and Jewish background for the Gospel, rather than a Gnostic one. In his 1956 study, G. D. Kirkpatrick found that there is no word in John and the *Hermetica* which

⁴⁵ *Against Heresies* 3.11.1 (ANF 1:1085).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁴⁸ Keener, 161.

does not also occur in the LXX,⁴⁹ though he found four key terms shared by *Hermetica*, Philo, Josephus, the LXX, and the Apostolic Fathers which are not included in the Gospel.⁵⁰ He concluded that the language of John does not depend on the *Hermetica* or any Gnostic literature, but rather, comes out of Biblical and Jewish literature. Agreeing with H. Riesenfeld, Kirkpatrick writes, “The Evangelist presents the revelation of Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Biblical religion.”⁵¹ In his attempts to prove the Fourth Gospel’s dependence upon Gnosticism, Bultmann also compares the Fourth Gospel to literature from the Gnostic sect of Mandaeanism, finding analogous stories between the two. Dating, however, also disproves Bultmann’s supposition in this case; it is more probable that the Mandaean sect found its origins in Christianity, and still retained some Christian stories, than vice versa.⁵² Extant Mandaean documents date much later than Christianity; the oldest text available is inscribed on an amulet dated ca. 400 C.E.,⁵³ and the Mandaean Canon as a whole is no younger than A.D. 700.⁵⁴ Brown considers the Gospel’s background to be the Old Testament and Jewish ideology, which likewise influenced the thoughts of the Qumran community as well.⁵⁵ Some have even found connections in John among

⁴⁹ G.D. Kirkpatrick, “The Religious Background of the Fourth Gospel,” in *Studies in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. F.L. Cross (London: A.R. Mowbray & Company Limited, 1957): 34-66, 43.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁵² Keener, 165.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁵⁴ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1958), 115.

⁵⁵ Brown, 56.

Gnosticism, Jewish mysticism, and Jewish apocalyptic thought.⁵⁶ Morris, however, believes it is untenable that one written work could concurrently and precisely portray the essential doctrines of “traditional Judaism, mystical Judaism, and Qumran,”⁵⁷ and contends that the background of the Fourth Gospel is comprised solely of the Christian faith.⁵⁸

Despite the polytheistic roots of Hellenistic thought, Hellenism promoted the spread of Christianity by providing a consistent language and culture throughout the Mediterranean world.⁵⁹ Some common ideas between Platonism and Christianity acted as an ideological bridge for communicating the Gospel; the concept of a Supreme Being, the soul’s immortality, and a hidden, mysterious spiritual reality containing permanent truth.⁶⁰ Some scholars believe that the similarities between John, Philo, and other Greek philosophers suggest Hellenistic influence on the Fourth Gospel.⁶¹ Multiple examples of John’s affinity for contrasts (light verses dark, spirit verses flesh, eternal life verses earthly life, and heavenly bread verses perishable bread) bear a resemblance to Platonism, with an emphasis on the real world verses the “world of appearances.” However, Brown contends

⁵⁶ Morris, 56

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 16.

⁶¹ Keener, 175. Also Dodd, 409, Morris, 56.

that any parallels would have been channeled through the presiding thought patterns of the Palestinian environment, not necessarily having a direct connection with Platonism.⁶²

Mystery Cults

Along with the key elements of philosophy and rationalism in Hellenistic thought resided an emphasis on destiny and astrology from the mystery religions.⁶³ The mystery religions syncretized aspects of numerous non-exclusive ancient religions various cultural origins.⁶⁴ Some examples of traditions included in the mystery cults were those centered on worship of the Egyptian deities Isis and Osiris, the Indo-Iranian god Mithra, and the Semitic Great Mother.⁶⁵ Mystics believed that man was subject to the gods, demons and fate, and that the only way to escape this circumstance was to be taken to the heavens and live in “communion with God.”⁶⁶ Key to this transition was to seek and find a savior, through whom mystics believed it was possible to attain not only salvation after death, but assurance in the present life.

Barrett references numerous aspects of the Gospel which he believes was intended to speak specifically to the mystery cults. He finds the Johannine presentation of Christ to bear striking resemblance to the Hellenistic figure θεὸς ἄνθρωπος. Barrett contends that John sought to correct the mystery cult belief system, which relied on signs and regarded Jesus

⁶² Brown, 57.

⁶³ Barrett, 36.

⁶⁴ González, 15.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Barrett, 37.

as a “wonder-worker” who performed miracles to inspire faith.⁶⁷ Barrett highlights the mystics’ practice of the sacraments, which they believed would impart to them some of the divine life and assure them of communion with the gods in the afterlife.⁶⁸ These concepts may parallel some ideas presented in John (i.e., 6:35) but, Barrett admits, the discrepancies between John and the mystery religions are more numerous than their similarities.⁶⁹ Barrett alludes to the *Chambers Dictionary* definition of mysticism: “a tendency of religious feeling marked by an effort to attain to direct and immediate communion with God,” and reasons that the Gospel differs from mysticism in that the only communion with God it provides is that mediated through Christ.⁷⁰ Barrett also notes that the Fourth Gospel places too much emphasis on the “intellectual content of the Christian faith” to be mystic. In addition, while the θεὸς ἄνθρωπος typical to most mystery religions is a mythological figure, Jesus, the closest parallel to this in John, is a historical person.⁷¹ A third distinctive element Barrett acknowledges for Johannine Christianity is the involvement of both faith and knowledge in the responsibility of the believer. John did not indicate the existence of special “mystic” Christians; the knowledge presented in the Gospel is intelligible to all.⁷² Barrett’s final view is that, living in an environment steeped in these ideas, the Evangelist

⁶⁷ Ibid., 74.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 85.

⁷¹ Ibid., 38.

⁷² Ibid., 87.

seems to purposefully write in a manner sympathetic to this culture, but presents the “true Savior, and the true revelation,”⁷³

While Barrett points out conceptual similarities between the mystical religions and the Fourth Gospel, much of this is an unconvincing argument from silence. Though John’s readers lived among mystery cults in a diverse religious environment, there are no aspects of John’s Gospel which seem to mimic these cults.⁷⁴ However, the Evangelist does explicitly interact with Judaism in numerous instances, wherein he quotes Old Testament texts or alludes to Jewish beliefs, history, and practices: 1:20-23, 41, 45; 2:6, 13, 20; 3:14; 4:9, 12, 20, 25; 5:1, 9-10, 16, 18; 6:4, 14, 31-32, 45, 49; 7:2, 22-23, 37, 40, 42; 8:5, 17, 33, 37, 39, 40-41, 52-53; 9:7, 14, 16, 28; 10:22, 34-5; 11:24, 55; 12:1, 34, 38-41; 13:1, 18; 15:25; 18:9, 20, 39; 19:7, 14, 24, 28, 31, 36-37, 42; 20:9. These references to Judaism exemplify the Evangelist’s desire to interact overtly with Jewish contemporary culture, but the Fourth Gospel does not include similarly specific allusions to mystery religions. Therefore, I do not support Barrett’s theory that engagement with the mystery cults was a focus of the Evangelist as he wrote the Gospel.

First-Century Judaism

The Roman overthrow of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 came with significant consequences for the Jewish community in the Mediterranean world. Before the war, Judaea had been under the authority of the Syrian governor, but was now an independent province of Rome. Its transition from a third-category Roman province to second category resulted in the

⁷³ Ibid., 36.

⁷⁴ Carson, *Gospel*, 161.

presence of a standing legion in Judea.⁷⁵ With the destruction of the Temple, the priesthood was rendered powerless,⁷⁶ and it soon disappeared.⁷⁷ Whereas the Temple had been the focal point for centuries, the religious leaders (now the Pharisees) were adjusting to practicing Judaism without a Temple.⁷⁸ In the midst of the war, the renowned Pharisee Yohanan ben Zakkai traveled to Yavneh and started a rabbinic school that would soon become the focal point of post-war Rabbinic Judaism. Yohanan ben Zakkai's teachings promoted a way of atonement through religious duties which rendered a Judaism without the Temple feasible.⁷⁹ Because of their faith that there would one day be a "day of restoration," rabbis maintained a thorough description of the Temple and the priest's assignments in daily services.⁸⁰

Jewish believers continued to take part in the activity of the synagogue during the first century, according to Acts 22:19, Acts 26:11, and James 2:2. Rabbinic literature even testifies that Jewish Christians attended the synagogue during the second century as a way of identifying themselves with Israel. This, however, exacerbated an already poignant identity crisis the Jewish community had been experiencing since A.D. 70. A definitive

⁷⁵ Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 131.

⁷⁶ Frederick J. Murphy, *Early Judaism: The Exile to the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 389.

⁷⁷ Schäfer, 132.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Murphy, 389.

⁸⁰ Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1898), 2:274.

exclusion of those who differentiated from their belief system was an important part of Jewish leaders' efforts to set themselves apart as Jews.⁸¹

Rabbis at Yavneh concentrated on establishing a unified halakic Judaism, and were troubled by the presence of Christians since this hindered their ability to gain influence in the synagogues throughout the Diaspora.⁸² Scripture makes multiple references to the Jewish authorities driving out Johannine Christians, including Revelation 3:7-9.⁸³ Whether or not there was a complete expulsion of Jewish Christians from the synagogue around the beginning of the first century, the Dead Sea Scrolls and rabbinic literature both support this claim.⁸⁴ The use of the Birkath Ha-minim in synagogue services in A.D. 85 is thought to have commenced early enough to act as a catalyst for the friction between Jewish Christians and the synagogue leaders.⁸⁵ The intention behind its inclusion in synagogue liturgy may have been an effort to dissuade Jews from joining the new Christian religion.⁸⁶

Sitz im Leben of the Johannine Community

Some scholars have attempted to reconstruct the life-setting of the Johannine Christians based on the text of the Fourth Gospel itself, presupposing that the author intentionally used narrative to speak to contemporary issues. Such is the thesis of Paul

⁸¹ John Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah: The History, Literature, and Theology of the Johannine Community*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 77.

⁸² Keener, 207.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 208. Keener references 4Q265 1 1-2; 4Q266 18 4-5; 4Q284a.

⁸⁵ Keener, 209.

⁸⁶ Painter, 72.

Anderson's essay, in which he claims that the Bread of Life Discourse is "...a written record of early Christian homily (or homilies) expanding on the meaning of the feeding for later audiences."⁸⁷ Anderson contends that four crises of the Johannine community are presented and addressed in the Discourse: (1) Physical bread verses revelational significance, (2) Bread of Torah verses Jesus' bread, (3) The Cost of Discipleship, and (4) Juxtaposition of Peter and the Beloved Disciple (with ecclesiastical implications).⁸⁸ The problem with this hypothesis is that it assumes fragmentation of the Discourse and superimposes over it a structure that is not necessarily dictated by the text itself.

John Painter attempts to prove a similar theory in *Quest for the Messiah*, where he asserts that the Graeco-Roman "quest and rejection" biography genre is employed by the Fourth Evangelist as a way of encouraging Johannine Christians in the midst of separation and persecution from the synagogue.⁸⁹ As he compares the Fourth Gospel to this genre, which was typically used to shed light on the struggle between "competing value systems in the ancient world," Painter claims the Gospel serves as a window into the Johannine Christians' conflicts with the synagogue, and the Evangelist's orientation toward the conflict.⁹⁰ He sees this pattern in the overall structure of John; chapters 1-4 reflect the "quest" portion, while 5-12 reflect the "rejection" portion.⁹¹ Painter believes that the

⁸⁷ Paul N. Anderson, "The Sitz im Leben of the Johannine Bread of Life Discourse and its Evolving Context," in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸⁹ Painter, 8.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

“quest” portions of some Johannine pericopes relate to the Christians’ experience before their expulsion from the synagogue, while the “rejection” portions reflect the time after the expulsion, exploring the friction between the two communities.⁹² According to Painter, this conflict is highlighted in John through the authorial emphasis on the rejection of Christ and his followers by the Jewish community and on the Christians’ identification with the covenant community of God. Along a similar vein, Meeks claims that in the Gospel, new believers’ detachment from “the world” equates to their detachment from Judaism.⁹³

Painter writes that some of the distinctly Johannine theology arose out of efforts to develop and strengthen the shunned new group.⁹⁴ However, I agree with Ridderbos, who sees such a view of Johannine Christology to be a “narrowing of the Johannine purpose.”⁹⁵ I believe Carson is more accurate in his reliance upon John 20:30-31 for the purpose of the Gospel.⁹⁶ In response to Meeks’ claim that the Johannine community had a “sectarian consciousness,”⁹⁷ Carson references John’s Christology:

To think of the Johannine community as isolated and sectarian is to miss the grand vision of John 17, not to mention the fact that John’s Christology finds its closest

⁹² Ibid., 7.

⁹³ Wayne Meeks, “The Man From Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91, no. 1 (March 1972): 69, accessed September 29, 2015, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3262920>.

⁹⁴ Painter, 77-8.

⁹⁵ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1997), 11.

⁹⁶ Carson, *Gospel*, 90.

⁹⁷ Meeks, 71.

parallels in the New Testament in the so-called hymns, (i.e. Col. 1:15-20)...which suggests that the Fourth Evangelist is thoroughly in touch with the wider church.⁹⁸

The Christology of the Fourth Gospel and the Christian hymns mentioned are not only similar; they show an affinity to the Word/wisdom tradition presented in some Old Testament texts and Jewish literature such as Wisdom 7:25 and Philo's writings.⁹⁹ This displays the Evangelist's attempt to connect with the Church at large, rather than seclude the Johannine Christians. Overall, I agree with Ridderbos that there is not enough evidence to fully recreate the social situation of the Johannine community,¹⁰⁰ and an attempt to prove an authorial intent based on the sectarianism of the Johannine community disregards the author's purpose as he has stated himself: "...but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31 ESV).

The discussion of the Fourth Gospel's historical context helps the reader to interpret the Gospel in light of its authorial intent, understanding that though it bears some slight likenesses to contemporary religions, the Gospel's message was not influenced by them. This discussion also speaks to the subject of the book's purpose, which has a direct impact on our understanding of the Bread of Life Discourse. If, as Painter claims, the theology and Christology of the Fourth Gospel was meant to promote the establishment of the Johannine community and recount its conflicts with the synagogue, then one might also expect the

⁹⁸ Carson, *Gospel*, 88.

⁹⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 112.

¹⁰⁰ Ridderbos, 11.

teaching of the Bread of Life Discourse to be most accurately interpreted through this grid. However, as I have stated earlier, such an approach is inconsistent with the entire Fourth Gospel. I regard the purpose of the Gospel to be Christological rather than sociological, according to John 20:30-31. This also informs my approach to the Bread of Life Discourse.

CHAPTER 3

STRUCTURE OF THE BREAD OF LIFE DISCOURSE

In this chapter, I describe the analyses put forth by several scholars whom I have consulted regarding the structure of the Bread of Life Discourse. Each scholar's approach has informed a facet of my own understanding of the Discourse's framing and structure. Therefore, in this chapter I explain each scholar's research as step in presenting my own analysis and present my own conclusion afterward.

Scenic Composition

The discussion around the structure of Jesus' Capernaum address naturally begins with consideration of its beginning and end, as portrayed by the writer of the Fourth Gospel. Some scholars, such as Raymond Brown, believe the Discourse begins at verse 35 because of the importance of Jesus' statement, "I am the Bread of Life." Others consider the beginning of the Discourse to be at verse 27, since they see a connection between this verse and the concluding verses, 52-58. Beutler frames the discourse starting at verse 22, since this verse contributes to the "scenic composition."¹ C.H. Dodd,² Craig Keener³ and C.K.

¹ Johannes S.J. Beutler, "The Structure of John 6," in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), 122.

² C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1953), 334.

³ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, 2003), 1: 675.

Barrett⁴ also view the beginning of the Discourse in the same way. Moloney values the inclusion of verses 22-24 in the structure of the passage because of the vital role these verses play in bringing the characters of the discourse together: “In order to involve the people, the disciples, and Jesus in a discussion and discourse over the bread from heaven, which has the miracle of the gift of bread (verses 5-15) as its point of reference, the groups must be reunited. Thus verses 22-24 must be read as a second introductory passage.”⁵

Keener, while not necessarily espousing the theory that John formatted his Gospel like a Greek tragedy, does admit that Greek storytelling during this period shared some elements with contemporary Greek drama.⁶ The Fourth Gospel, in particular, meets the rule of Greek drama which only allowed for two or three characters to speak at a time. The scenic division of the Fourth Gospel also seems to mimic that of Greek dramas.⁷ These influences make scenic composition and indicators all the more significant in the conversation of its structure.

Beutler highlights scenic composition in the Discourse as a driver of structure by demonstrating a correlation between indications of time and locale throughout the chapter: “The narrator’s reference to time, locale, and participating persons...allow a preliminary division of the chapter into scenes.”⁸ Beutler also takes into consideration change in

⁴ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 282.

⁵ Francis J. Moloney, “The Function of Prolepsis in the Interpretation of John 6,” in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, 129-148 (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), 129-30.

⁶ Keener, 10.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Beutler, 119.

“grammatical subject,” and notes the correlation between indicators such as time and locale as well as the dialogue between characters.⁹ The two miracle accounts preceding the Discourse (verses 1-15, 16-21) and the two dialogues following it (60-65, 66-71) symmetrically frame the Discourse. I support Beutler’s inclusion of 22-24 in the section with the Discourse since they set the stage before Jesus’ dialogue with the crowd in verse 25, which lead into his homily. Verses 22 and 60 contain the two time-indicating phrases which act as bookends for the Discourse. Since verse 60 opens a new scene with οὖν ἀκούσαντες, I find it appropriate to end the Discourse section at verse 59. I am not in agreement with all aspects of Beutler’s structural analysis, but I do find his framing of the Discourse to be particularly helpful. Therefore, I will now explain his view in greater detail.

The present discussion will focus upon three factors of scene composition—time, locale, and participating persons—and their implications toward structure. Considering the limited number of narrative time indicators in the chapter (16, 22, 25, 60, 66, 60), verse 22 stands out as a marker of a new section in the chapter because of the opening clause, “On the next day.” Shifts in characters, or groups of characters, occur between these sections: verses 1-15, 16-21, 22-59, 60-65, 66-71. The sudden increase in characters, from Jesus and the disciples to “the crowd,” is an indicator of a new section at verse 22.

John only mentions the location of the discourse, Capernaum, in verses 24 and 59.¹⁰ This resulting similarity between the two verses offers a third argument against beginning the Discourse section any later than 24. The correspondence between time and locale adds weight to Beutler’s hypothesis of their importance in the discussion of structure:

⁹ Ibid., 118.

¹⁰ Ibid., 123.

Time Indicator

16: “When evening came”

22: “On the next day”

25: “When they found him...”¹¹

60: “When [the disciples] heard...”

66: “After this,”

7:1: “After this,”

Locale Indicator

1-15: Beyond the Sea of Galilee/Tiberius

- Christ went up the mountain in vv. 13, 15

16-17: Disciples’ movement toward Capernaum

21: Jesus and the disciples reach the shore

24: Capernaum mentioned

59: Capernaum mentioned

Beutler sets the end of the discourse at 6:59, because of what Carl J. Bjerkelund indicates is a “clause of precision.” This is the best opportunity for a new start, as it gives the location of the entire discourse.¹² This verse corresponds with 6:22 at the beginning of the Discourse because, in addition to thematic and semantic characteristics, it too marks the beginning of a new section, using the temporal indicator “On the next day.” There are no additional temporal phrases that mention day or evening before Capernaum is mentioned again in verse 59, a coordination which also appears to present verses 22-59 as a distinct section.

Beutler also sees a connection between verses 28f. and 41-51, as well as verses 30-33 and 34-40.¹³ Beutler proposes a chiasmic structure of the Discourse section, taking cues from linguistic and topical considerations:¹⁴

¹¹ Beutler does not include this phrase in his list of temporal indicators. However, it is my opinion that such an inclusion is consistent with other phrases he has considered temporal, such as οὐν ἀκούσαντες in 6:60.

¹² Beutler, 122.

¹³ Ibid., 123.

¹⁴ Ibid., 123-4.

22-27

28f.¹⁵

30-33

34-40

41-51

51; 52-58

As I previously mentioned, the correlation between 22-27 and 51-58 lies in reoccurrences of phrases, actions and themes in the speech: The phrase “Son of Man” only appears in 27 and 53. Verses 27 and 51 are the only verses that contain Jesus’ speech about his act of “giving” a gift. βρῶσις only appears in verse 27 and 55. μένω only occurs in 27 and 56.¹⁶ The correspondence between 28f. and 41-51 lies in their common theme of “working,” although Beutler admits (and I agree) that this connection is weak.¹⁷ His chiasmic structure would be improved if he included verse 29 in his analysis. In verse 28, the members of the crowd express their understanding of their need to do the ἔργα τοῦ Θεοῦ. Jesus responds by explaining that they are not required to perform multiple works, but rather, they need to rely on God to do his *one* work, τὸ ἔργον τοῦ Θεοῦ, which consists

¹⁵ Beutler only explicitly seems to include v.28 in this layer of his chiasm, although as he explains the conceptual relationship between verse 28 and 41-51, his argument actually includes verse 29. Ibid. 124.

¹⁶ Ibid., 123.

¹⁷ Ibid., 124.

in....“faith in the one whom he has sent”.¹⁸ Verses 41-51 flow naturally out of this discussion, with verse 44 showcasing the work of God in the process of belief in Christ; ὁ πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με ἐλκύσῃ αὐτόν. Beutler does admit that the Evangelist employs a different verb for “send” in verse 44 (πέμπω) than he does in verse 29 (ἀποστέλλω).¹⁹ The theme of faith is also common between these two sections.²⁰

The last of Beutler’s corresponding sections are 30-33 and 34-40. The common subject is:

“...on the one side seeing the Bread from Heaven and believing, on the other the origin of the Bread from heaven and its identity. Here the correspondence lies in the theme of the Bread from Heaven; on the one hand, seeing him and placing faith in him, and on the other, his origin and identity.”²¹ These sections lead to the “turning point” where Jesus identifies himself as the Bread of Life in verse 35. Here the discourse moves from one of faith in the work of God to the true identification of the Bread from Heaven as Jesus, the Bread of Life.

Though I appreciate Beutler’s attention to detail, I do not think his supposed chiasmic structure leads directly to the Discourse’s central meaning. The correlations he highlights regarding subject matter and semantics do, however, point to an overall unity of verses 22-58.

¹⁸ Ibid., 124.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 125.

Beutler considers the later section, 6:60-71, to be significant in the structure of the Bread of Life Discourse because of the contribution it makes by describing the outcome of the Discourse, namely, “leading the disciples to a decision of faith.”²² Dodd also notes this function of these verses, highlighting that because of this decision the Twelve stay with Jesus, though many followers abandon him at this point.²³ However, Beutler does not include verses 60-71 in the Bread of Life Discourse. Rather, he ends this segment at verse 59.²⁴ Though I do not agree with Beutler’s view that the Discourse can legitimately be read as a chiasm, I do agree with the reasoning he gives for placing the boundaries of the Discourse at verses 22 and 59, while acknowledging the important roles played by the verses preceding the Discourse (1-15, 16-21) and following the Discourse (60-65, 66-71).

Moloney considers John 6:25-59 to be a “series of brief discourses, united around the theme of the bread from heaven, which unfolds under the stimulation of questions posed to Jesus.”²⁵ As I will show in my summary of his study, Moloney relies on the pattern naturally present in the dialogue between the crowd and Jesus as he examines structure. This seems to be a more natural approach to structuring the narrative than the chiasm proposed by Beutler. Peder Borgen’s research has convinced Moloney that the discourse (6:25-59) is a homiletic midrash on a text the crowd references (6:31) which alludes to the

²² Ibid., 126.

²³ Dodd, 334.

²⁴ Beutler, 118.

²⁵ Moloney, 130.

manna in the desert (possibly Psalm 78:23-24).²⁶ Verses 32-48 form a “midrashic paraphrase” from Scripture. Verses 6:49-58 form a “midrashic paraphrase” centered on of the Scriptural verb “to eat.”²⁷

Moloney analyses the Bread of Life discourse by highlighting the questions posed by the crowd, and Jesus’ response. Though the crowd drives the dialogue, Moloney understands it to be a prolepsis. Jesus knows what is motivating the crowd to seek him after the feeding miracle. He anticipates their questions and steers the conversation to communicate his identity as the ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, and the truth that that, in order to live forever, one must feed on him (verse 58). Moloney outlines the discourse as follows:

1. “Rabbi, when did you come here?” (6:25-29, ESV) This question sets the tone for the entire discourse. Jesus begins his teaching on the bread of life by instructing the people to search for this bread.
2. “Then, what sign do you do?” (6:30) Jesus is being asked to perform a miracle of more weighty significance than Moses’ provision of manna in the desert. Jesus teaches about the “true bread from heaven, perfecting the former gift of God in the Manna dispensed by Moses.”²⁸
3. “Sir, give us this bread always.” (6:34) Jesus answers this by explaining that he is the “true bread from heaven,” and that he is the only way to true knowledge of God and eternal life.
4. “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How does he now say ‘I have come down from heaven’?” (6:42). At this point, Jesus identifies himself with the life-giving bread from heaven. “The question of origins is explored. Jesus is able to give the bread from heaven which will raise up the believer to eternal life because he comes from heaven. His flesh is the

²⁶ Ibid., 131.

²⁷ Ibid., 132.

²⁸ Ibid., 135.

bread which gives life to the world.”²⁹ He is the bread that would feed and sustain everyone who comes to him. The focus is more on what he does than who he is.³⁰

5. (6:52-59) “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” Jesus instructs on the necessity of eating his flesh and drink his blood, the perfection of the food given to the Israelites in the desert.³¹

Moloney’s approach to the structure is helpful in tracing the progression of Jesus’ teaching in the Discourse as he is interrogated by his audience; the “narrative shape.”³² It highlights the movement of subject in the dialogue from the nature of the true bread from heaven to Jesus’ identification with Bread of Life, and then to instructions as to how one may partake of the Bread. I appreciate Moloney’s intent on reading with the grain of Scripture in this manner. However, if Borgen’s research is correct and the Evangelist composed Discourse in the structure of homiletic midrash, consideration of its format clearly marks verse 31b as the focal point of the passage.

Midrashic Structure of the Discourse

In Peder Borgen’s analysis of the Discourse’s structure, Borgen showcases similarities among the Bread of Life Discourse, the homilies of Philo, and that of Jewish rabbinic midrashim. The merit I find in Borgen’s conclusion lies in his consideration of early Jewish literature, over and against other approaches to structure analysis which tend to view the text through a Western grid. Ridderbos writes that the goal of Borgen “...is not strictly to evaluate the construction of the text by a fixed pattern of midrash, but to make

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 138.

³¹ Ibid., 135.

³² Ibid.

visible, in a more general sense, contemporary backgrounds of homiletical or expository forms.”³³ In light of Borgen’s study, Craig Keener writes, “Because the broad pattern in Philo and the NT resembles the later rabbinic pattern, the pattern probably was common in early Judaism.”³⁴ I shall now spend some time explaining Borgen’s analysis.

Shared features between the writings of Philo and John are: questions and answers, direct exposition, and exegetical problem solving; factors which were all present in synagogue teaching. Borgen demonstrates this through his examination of rabbinic midrashim, such as *Mekilta on Exodus*.³⁵ Philo also records such elements in his *Therapeutai*; the leader exegetes the sacred writings and gives solutions to perplexing relationships between passages. Questions and objections are presented by the audience during the lecture.³⁶

The specific format of an exposition in this genre contains the following:

1. Quote from the Old Testament,
2. Exegetical Paraphrase of the Old Testament quotation and exposition with an introduction and conclusion,
3. Subordinate quotation from the Old Testament.³⁷

In the Bread of Life Discourse, when John records the dialogue between Jesus and his audience, he does so in the format of a midrashic exposition of an Old Testament

³³ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 221.

³⁴ Keener, 679.

³⁵ Peder Borgen, “John 6: Tradition, Interpretation and Composition,” in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, 95-114 (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), 100.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

³⁷ Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 38.

passage.³⁸ The main Old Testament quotation is found in 6:31b: “He gave them bread from heaven to eat.” Since the structure of the passage follows that of homiletic midrash, Borgen considers the structure of the entire discourse to center on this Old Testament quote.³⁹ This is also the view held by Craig Keener.⁴⁰ This conclusion differs from that of J. Painter, who considers Jesus’ declaration in 6:35 to be the focal point of the conversations in verses 25-36. Borgen supports his view by noting the unity among verses 31, 35 and 39. “The Old Testament quotation in v. 31b and the pronouncement in v. 35a are tied together in the way formulated in 5:39: ‘It is they (the Scriptures) that bear witness to me.’”⁴¹

The midrashic tradition would often involve intertwining fragments from the haggadah and the Old Testament.⁴² Borgen shows this pattern in John by underscoring the words in John 6:31-58 which are also found in the fragments from the haggadah:⁴³

31 οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν τὸ μάννα ἔφαγον ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ, καθὼς ἐστὶν γεγραμμένον· ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς φαγεῖν.

32 εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐ Μωϋσῆς δέδωκεν ὑμῖν τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, ἀλλ’ ὁ πατήρ μου δίδωσιν ὑμῖν τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τὸν ἀληθινόν·

33 ὁ γὰρ ἄρτος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν ὁ καταβαίνων ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ζωὴν διδοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ.

34 εἶπον οὖν πρὸς αὐτόν· κύριε, πάντοτε δὸς ἡμῖν τὸν ἄρτον τοῦτον.

35 εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς· ὁ ἐρχόμενος πρὸς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ πεινάσῃ, καὶ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ διψήσῃ πώποτε.

³⁸ Borgen, John 6, 101.

³⁹ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁰ Keener, 675.

⁴¹ Borgen, John 6, 105.

⁴² Borgen, *Bread*, 28.

⁴³ Ibid., 23.

38 Ὅτι καταβέβηκα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, οὐχ ἵνα ποιῶ τὸ θέλημα τὸ ἐμόν, ἀλλὰ τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πέμψαντός με.

41 Ἐγόγγυζον οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι εἶπεν· ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ καταβάς ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ

42 καὶ ἔλεγον οὐχ οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ υἱὸς Ἰωσήφ, οὗ ἡμεῖς οἴδαμεν τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὴν μητέρα; πῶς νῦν λέγει ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβέβηκα;

48 Ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς.

49 οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν ἔφαγον ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τὸ μάννα καὶ ἀπέθανον

50 οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβαίνων, ἵνα τις ἐξ αὐτοῦ φάγη καὶ μὴ ἀποθάνῃ.

51 ἐγὼ εἰμι ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ζῶν ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς· ἐάν τις φάγη ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου ζήσῃ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα, καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς.

52 Ἐμάχοντο οὖν πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι λέγοντες· πῶς δύναται οὗτος ἡμῖν δοῦναι τὴν σάρκα [αὐτοῦ] φαγεῖν;

53 εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐὰν μὴ φάγητε τὴν σάρκα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καὶ πίνητε αὐτοῦ τὸ αἶμα, οὐκ ἔχετε ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς.

54 Ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἶμα, ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον, καὶ ἐγὼ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ.

55 Ἡ γὰρ σὰρξ μου ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν βρῶσις, καὶ τὸ αἶμά μου ἀληθῶς ἐστὶν πόσις.

56 Ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἶμα, ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει, κἀγὼ ἐν αὐτῷ.

57 καθὼς ἀπέστειλén με ὁ ζῶν πατήρ κἀγὼ ζῶ διὰ τὸν πατέρα, καὶ ὁ τρώγων με κἀκεῖνος ζήσῃ δι' ἐμέ.

58 Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς· οὐ καθὼς ἔφαγον οἱ πατέρες ὑμῶν τὸ μάννα, καὶ ἀπέθανον· ὁ τρώγων τοῦτον τὸν ἄρτον, ζήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

In John 6:31-58, the author employs the technique of exegetical paraphrase, a pattern which is not only found in John, but also Philo (*Leg. all. III* 162-168, *Mut.* 253-263), and also is typical of rabbinic midrashim.⁴⁴ In the process of exegetical paraphrase, the Old Testament quotation is reiterated and discussed throughout the homily. In his study,

⁴⁴ Ibid., 35.

Borgen follows the principle: “The unit which belongs to a quotation from the Old Testament may be traced by examining the extent to which the paraphrase of that quotation goes.”⁴⁵ This principle not only sheds light on the structure of the Bread of Life Discourse; it supports the end of the discourse dialogue occurring at verse 58. Following the process of exegetical paraphrase gives the following structure for the homily:

- (1) Exegetical quotation in verse 31b [A and B]: (a) “He gave them bread from heaven” (b) “to eat.”
- (2) Paraphrase and exposition of A: verses 32-48. (contains subordinate quotation; 6:45)
- (3) Paraphrase and exposition of B: verses 49-58.⁴⁶ (“A” section of the OT quote continues to be paraphrased)⁴⁷

In John 6:31-58, the first section of the quotation is given by the crowd in verse 31: “He gave them bread from heaven.” It is rephrased and discussed in verses 32-48. The infinitive “to eat” is reiterated and discussed in verses 49-58.⁴⁸ The “A” section of the OT quote is paraphrased throughout the entire exposition, and is repeated in verses 51b-58.⁴⁹ Verse 58 is a culminating statement of the homily, and alludes to the Old Testament quotation in 31b: “This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”⁵⁰ Philo’s *Leg. all III* 162-168, and *Mut.* 253-263 similarly contain summarizing statements, which refer to the original OT quotation.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁶Ibid., 33-4.

⁴⁷Ibid., 35.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

Palestinian Midrash

Borgen shows that a similar homiletic pattern to that of John 6:31-58 is found not only in Jewish-Hellenistic homiletic material (such as that of Philo), but also in Palestinian midrash. Maybaum proposes a typical pattern for works in this genre, which Borgen uses as a basis for his comparison:⁵²

1. Text
2. “Connecting formula between the text and the second text cited in the proem.”
3. The second text (from the Prophets or the Writings) followed by an exposition.
4. “The connecting formula between the exposition and the close.”
5. The text from the pericope is repeated, as the closing point of the pattern.

Characteristics of the Palestinian midrash format put forth by Maybaum also appear in the Bread of Life Discourse. The initial Old Testament quotation is made by the crowd in verse 31b. The second, proemial text is found in verse 45, quoting Isaiah 54:13.⁵³ The “connecting formula” between the main Old Testament text and the subordinate text lies in verses 32-33: “Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” The connection is made clear by use of the phrase καὶ ζωὴν διδοὺς τῷ κόσμῳ, a phrase is often used in midrashic literature to refer to the Torah. An example of this lies in *Tanhuma Shemoth* 25: “The voice...gave life to Israel who accepted the Torah,” in *Mek. Ex.* 15, 26: “God said to Moses: Say to Israel: The words of the Torah which I have given to you are life unto you,” and in *Mek. Ex.* 29,9: “...if the earth trembled when *He gave life to the*

⁵² Ibid., 51.

⁵³ Ibid., 40.

world.”⁵⁴ According to Borgen, though the indirect object differs among these phrases—some portraying life being given to Israel, and some portraying life as being given to the world—it is important to remember that in Jewish writings, as well as in the Gospel of John, life was given to the world through Israel.⁵⁵ In John 6:33, the Bread from Heaven takes on the function of the Torah by becoming the world’s source of life.⁵⁶ The association of the Bread from Heaven with Torah gives a substantial connection between 31b and the subordinate text (verse 45): πάντες διδακτοὶ θεοῦ. This supporting quotation from Isaiah 54:13 meets the third criteria in in Maybaum’s outline.⁵⁷ The “connecting formula” between the exposition and the closing statement, and the correspondence between the introductory and concluding statements, is found in the repetition of the homiletic text in verse 58.⁵⁸ Borgen highlights the existence of such supporting texts from the Prophets not only in John 6:31-58, but also Romans 4:1-22 and Galatians 3:6-29.⁵⁹ The specific similarities among John 6:31-58, the writings of Paul, Philo, and Palestinian midrashim support Borgen’s argument that the midrashic format is key to understanding the Discourse’s structure, and the Pentateuchal text presented in verse 31b is central in the Discourse.

As I mentioned earlier, the Bread of Life Discourse and the writings of Philo contain fragments of the haggadah woven throughout the text. This pattern is also seen

⁵⁴ Ibid., 148.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 149.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 51-2.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 58.

specifically in Palestinian midrash.⁶⁰ Additional aspects of Palestinian midrash correlate with the expositional pattern in John 6:31-58 and Philo, such as the use of a pattern of contrast in the exposition. This either takes the form of correcting the Hebrew text, which begins with a phrase such as **אל תקרי אלא** (“do not read...but”), or by contrasting the Old Testament quotation at hand with another passage; **אין כתיב כאן אלא** (“it is not written here..., but...”).⁶¹ Borgen cites *Mek. Ex. 16, 15*: “*Man did eat the bread of strong horses.*’ (Psalm 78:25). *Do not read* (**אל תקרי**) ‘*of strong horses*’ but (**אלא**) ‘*of the limbs*’ (**איברים**), *that is, bread that is absorbed by the limbs.*”⁶² The “exegetical pattern of contrast,” a Greek parallel to the midrashic method, is also present in John 6:32-33: “Jesus then said to them, ‘Truly, truly I say to you, it was not (οὐ...ἀλλ’) Moses who gave you bread from heaven, *but* my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’” Here the Old Testament quotation is explicated with a statement of contrast followed by an explicative statement beginning with “for” (γὰρ).

As I stated earlier in this chapter, research of each mentioned scholar has guided me in my study of the Discourse’s structure. Beutler’s approach to framing the Discourse by regarding the scenic composition, characters present, and phrases indicating time and location prompted me to consider these factors as I set the bookends for my own analysis. In my structural analysis I include, as does Beutler, 22-31a in the framing of the dialogue. These verses describe the gathering of the characters present during the Discourse, and

⁶⁰ Ibid., 61.

⁶¹ Ibid., 62.

⁶² Ibid., 63.

they provide the temporal and geographical context for the homily. I respect Moloney's deliberateness in following the natural flow of dialogue between Jesus and the crowd in his study, but prefer Borgen's approach to outlining the Discourse, with his convincing comparison of the Discourse's structure with that of first-century Palestinian homiletic midrash. This structural analysis implies that the entire discourse is an exposition of the Old Testament quotation at verse 31b, extending to verse 59. Investigation of the Discourse's structure is crucial in the discussion of the Discourse's authorial intent and overall meaning, since the Discourse's unity is often the focus of the academic conversation surrounding this subject.

CHAPTER 4 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BREAD OF LIFE DISCOURSE AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Considered by some to be “one of the most controversial topics in the study of the Fourth Gospel,”¹ the relationship between the Lord’s Supper and the Bread of Life Discourse has sparked countless discussions among scholars. Those who hold to the sapiential interpretation believe that the entire discourse alludes to the wisdom of Jesus’ teaching.² Raymond Brown names some scholars who espouse this view: Godet, B. Weiss, Bornhäuser, Odeberg, Schlatter and Strathmann.³ A second view is that the earlier section of the Discourse (verses 35-50 or 51) is sapiential, while verses 51c-58 speak directly about the Supper—a view held by Loisy, Tobac, Buzy, Cullmann, and Van den Busche.⁴ Another shade of this second view, espoused by Fueillet and Brown, regards the first section as primarily sapiential and secondarily Eucharistic. A third interpretation is that the entire discourse is overtly Eucharistic, and fourth, the bread refers simultaneously to wisdom and Jesus’ flesh.⁵ I would add a fifth interpretation to Brown’s list: The entire discourse speaks directly of Jesus’ relationship to those who put their faith in him, while possibly indirectly

¹ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 219.

² Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman, 2nd ed. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981), 272.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

alluding to the Lord's Supper. Therefore, Eucharistic overtones exist throughout the discourse. This is the view of Godet, Tasker,⁶ Mathison, Calvin, and Augustine.⁷ Each of these interpretations is contingent, in part, on whether one can properly regard verses 22-59 (or 35-59) as a unified entity.

Those who do not regard the Discourse as such espouse what Odeberg calls the partition theory,⁸ contending that the writer of the Discourse alludes directly to the Lord's Supper in verses 51c-58, but not at all in the earlier portion of the Discourse. U. Schnelle,⁹ Lagrange, E. Schweizer, Menoud, Mollat, Mussner, and Bultmann embrace this theory, dividing the homily into two distinct sections; verses 35-50 (or 51), which carries the sapiential theme (wherein solely belief in Jesus is required of his followers), and verses 51c-58, which shifts emphasis to an explicit Eucharistic reference, including the requisite literal eating of Jesus' flesh.¹⁰ Many who subscribe to this view believe verses 51c-58 to be a later addendum to the Gospel by a redactor, due to the apparent change in subject matter, style and vocabulary. Borgen, Godet,¹¹ Tasker, Mathison, Calvin, and Augustine, however, consider verses 22-59 to be a unified entity.¹² In this chapter, I will show the weaknesses of some traditional arguments against the unity of the Discourse, and support

⁶ R.V.G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. John*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: The Tyndale Press, 1976), 96.

⁷ Keith A. Mathison, *Given For You* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 223.

⁸ Hugo Odeberg, *The Fourth Gospel: Interpreted in its Relation to the Contemporaneous Religious Currents in Palestine and the Hellenistic-Oriental World* (Uppsala: Almqvist, 1929), 235.

⁹ Maarten J.J. Menken, "John 6:51-58 Eucharist or Christology?" in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), 186.

¹⁰ Brown, 272.

¹¹ Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John with an Historical and Critical Introduction*, trans. Timothy Dwight (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1893), 41.

¹² Mathison, 223.

the probability that the original audience would have heard a connection between the Lord's Supper and the Bread of Life Discourse.

Maarten J.J. Menken considers the so-called partition view to be assumed more often than supported with evidence,¹³ and, citing the research of E. Ruckstuhl and P. Dschulnigg on Johannine style, argues that vocabulary and style deviations proving that verses 51c-58 are a later interpolation have not actually been found. Verses 51c-58, Menken argues, still carry the Evangelist's distinct style.¹⁴ U. Schnelle and others have proposed arguments against the unity of the entire Discourse, which I will address:¹⁵

Some view the movement from ὁ πατήρ μου δίδωσιν ὑμῖν τὸν ἄρτον ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ in verse 32 to δώσω in verse 51 to be an indication that verses 51c-8 come from a later interpolation.¹⁶ Though in verse 27 the Evangelist uses the present tense in describing the Father's "giving," the Son is actually described as "giving" in the future tense (δώσει, δώσω) βρῶσιν τὴν μένουσαν εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον in both verses 27 and 51. In some texts, verse 27 reads δίδωσιν (⌘ D e ff² j), however, the stronger testimony of P⁷⁵, with δώσει, takes precedence. Barrett considers this use of the future tense appropriate, since he believes this verse alludes to the period of time after Jesus is glorified, wherein he imparts spiritual gifts to those who are in him (c.f. 7:39).¹⁷ Likewise, Menken contends that given Jesus' identification of himself with "the bread," it is fitting that, in

¹³ Menken, 186.

¹⁴ Ibid., 187.

¹⁵ Ibid., 186.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 287.

both verses 27 and 51, Jesus would use the future tense since he speaking of his sacrificial death, also in the future, in both verses 27 and 51c.¹⁸ Those who argue for a later interpolation based on the author's supposed unique use of δώσω in 51c do not take into consideration the fact that the author uses future tense to describe Jesus' actions in multiple places throughout the Discourse. Examples of this include: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑμῖν δώσει (6:27), τὸν ἐρχόμενον πρὸς ἐμὲ οὐ μὴ ἐκβάλω ἔξω (6:37), ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐγὼ [ἐν] τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. (6:40), ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν ἐν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ. (6:44), ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ (6:54).

Some scholars see an apparent shift in the identifier with the Bread from heaven as problematic. In verses 27-51, Jesus' person is the Bread from heaven, while in 51c-58, Jesus' flesh and blood are the Bread from heaven.¹⁹ Ridderbos considers this dichotomy to be false, and I agree. Admittedly, Jesus' language appears to change from literal to figurative in verse 57; Where in verses 35 and 47 he had exhorted his audience to "believe" and "come," he now tells them to eat his flesh and drink his blood. I appreciate and agree with Ridderbos' explanation of this: "That which has been expressed without imagery in the words 'believe' and 'come to me' (verses 35, 47) is now, in connection with Jesus' self-identification as 'the bread,' metaphorically called 'eating this bread' or (verse 57) even more directly 'eating me.'"²⁰ The movement from literal language to figurative language shows clarification rather than a change in subject.

¹⁸ Menken, 193.

¹⁹ Ibid., 186.

²⁰ Ridderbos, 235.

Ridderbos highlights a sound structural-analytic exegesis principle of W.S. Vorster: “We should explain the text from within its own semantic frame of reference (here the Bread of Life Discourse) and not derive its meaning (diachronically) from an externally adduced semantic context.”²¹ In verse 51 Jesus equates the former believing to eating.²² This flows quite seamlessly out of a discussion of Jesus’ self-identification as the Bread of Life; the analogous shift in imperative (come to/believe→eat) follows the movement of the conversation from literal to figurative. The language of “eating,” following Jesus’ prior statement in v.35, is a fitting way to describe “belief.” It actually would be more jarring to return to the language of “come to” and “believe” in verses 51-58 after the introduction of the bread imagery. Menken notes that *καὶ...δε* in verse 51c creates movement toward further specification of what had come before.²³ Menken also mentions the parallel shift from discussion of bread and Jesus’ person to Jesus’ *σάρξ* (6:51) and *αἷμα* (6:54), but notes that in verses 56-57, just as *ἄρτος* had been used interchangeably with Jesus’ person in verses 27-51, here *σάρξ* and *αἷμα* are again substituted with “I.” The double shift between *σάρξ*, *αἷμα*, and “I” clearly demonstrate that *σάρξ* and *αἷμα* represent Christ’s person, as *ἄρτος* had from verses 35-58. Ridderbos’ and Menken’s arguments convincingly prove that the parallel shifts in comparative imagery serve to unify the entire discourse, and support the Christological themes present in both sections 27-51b and 51c-58.²⁴ I do not deny the existence of Eucharistic terminology in verse 51c-58, but there is

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. Also Godet, 40.

²³ Menken 191-2.

²⁴ Ibid., 189.

sufficient material uniting the latter section with the former to render any musings of a possible redactor unnecessary.

Bultmann believes the more aggressive τρώγων in verse 54, instead of the earlier φαγεῖν in verse 31, connotes actual eating, whereas with φαγεῖν the author refers to “spiritual” eating.²⁵ Therefore, in verses 27-51, eating of the bread from heaven is metaphorical; in verses 51c-58, τρώγων and φαγεῖν are to be read literally. This is also the view shared by Leon Morris, who writes that this nuanced verb specifies eating with enjoyment, meaning literally “crunch” or “munch.”²⁶ Friberg even goes so far as to assume that the term refers to “deriving benefit from Christ's atoning death” in this context.²⁷ Menken admits that τρώγων is more forceful than φαγεῖν, however, he considers it irrelevant to the discussion at hand.²⁸ I agree with Carson,²⁹ Keener,³⁰ Barrett,³¹ and Menken³² who also hold that the Evangelist does not intend to evoke a nuanced meaning here; he merely favors this particular verb when conveying eating in the present tense. Actually, ἐσθίειν, which would have been a likely substitute for τρώγων, is never

²⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray, ed. R.W.N. Hoare and J.K. Riches (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 236.

²⁶ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 336.

²⁷ Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), “τρώγω”

²⁸ Menken, 196.

²⁹ Carson, 296.

³⁰ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, 2003), 1:690.

³¹ Barrett, 299.

³² Menken, 196.

employed in John.³³ The Evangelist also uses τρώγων in 13:18, where he quotes a portion of Psalm 41:9: καὶ γὰρ ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῆς εἰρήνης μου ἐφ’ ὃν ἤλπισα ὁ ἐσθίων ἄρτους μου ἐμεγάλυνεν ἐπ’ ἐμὲ πτερνισμόν.³⁴ Here he actually revises ἐσθίων which is supplied in the LXX.³⁵ The Hebrew term in the quoted OT passage is אָכַל. The manner in which the root אָכַל is used in the context of Psalm 41:9, as well as in most cases, means “to eat, consume, devour, burn up, feed,”³⁶ except in some instances, wherein the author makes reference to a ritualistic meal, such as Deuteronomy 12:7 and Leviticus 19:26. In Psalm 41:9 אָכַל describes the sharing of a meal, in a communal sense: “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” This phrase conveys the intimacy inherent in the sharing of a meal in the Israelite context,³⁷ which does not support Bultmann’s hypothesis that the Evangelist would have used τρώγων intentionally to convey eating in a more forceful or aggressive manner.

Bultmann considers the thematic shift 51b; “αὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σὰρξ μου ἐστὶν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς,” to be indicative of a later addition made by an “ecclesiastical editor” who sought to connect the Bread of Life Discourse with the Eucharist.³⁸ In 51b, Bultmann postulates that the editor provides a new definition of the

³³ Barrett, 299.

³⁴ 41:10 in MT.

³⁵ Carson, 296, Keener, 690.

³⁶ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds., *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906, Reprint, 1951), “אָכַל.”

³⁷ Gerald H. Wilson, *Psalms—Volume 1*, The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 654.

³⁸ Bultmann, 218-19.

Bread of Life: Christ's flesh, which is an obvious reference to Christ's death. However, just as the Evangelist has done before in Jesus' dialogue with the Samaritan woman (John chapter 4), he presents a dialogue in verses 25-35 which takes place on two different planes, discussing different kinds of feeding.³⁹ This creates a tension between the crowd's understanding of physical feeding and Jesus' teaching on spiritual feeding.⁴⁰ The tension is resolved with Jesus' claim in verse 35, "I am the bread of life..." After the episode with the Samaritan woman in chapter 4, it is clear to the reader that Jesus is offering something spiritual.⁴¹ In the same way, Jesus' later language of "eating" and "drinking" regarding his flesh and blood cannot be taken literally in a physical sense. Not only would this command be abhorrent in the context of Jewish Law if it were to be read literally—it goes against the grain of what comes earlier in the Discourse.

First-century Christians would have clearly read a reference to sacrifice in the use of δίδωμι + ὑπὲρ found in verse 51,⁴² which Bultmann argues is due to a later editor's introduction to a new Eucharistic interpretation of the Bread of Life.⁴³ Meredith Warren also notes that the δίδωμι + ὑπὲρ formula in verse 51 is used in other New Testament texts in reference to sacrifice (i.e., Ephesians 5:2).⁴⁴ However, she sees the δίδωμι + ὑπὲρ

³⁹ David Mark Ball, *'I Am' in John's Gospel: Literary Function, Background and Theological Implications* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press Ltd., 1996), 76.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid., 77.

⁴² George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 94.

⁴³ Bultmann, 234-5

⁴⁴ Meredith Warren, *My Flesh is Meat Indeed: A Nonsacramental Reading of John 6:51-58* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 224.

formula in verse 51 to be a connection to sacrifice rather than the Eucharist.⁴⁵ In her study, Warren found this formula to be used frequently in first-century romance novels, in which the hero gave himself up sacrificially.⁴⁶ For Warren, the 51c-58 section makes sense when it is interpreted in light of Jesus' death, an event to which the scene deliberately points. Warren mentions that a first-century Greco-Roman audience would have still associated this with a meal; the requisite cultic meal that typically followed sacrifice in the Greco-Roman pagan context.⁴⁷ However, the meal was not the central focus of a discussion involving the δίδωμι + ὑπὲρ formula.

John's use of σάρξ in verses 51c-58 would not have necessarily carried with it primarily Eucharistic implications in first-century Christian literature, though some argue that through its use the Evangelist hints at the Eucharist. In John as well as other early Christian writing, the preposition ὑπὲρ, when followed by a genitive, typically emphasizes the beneficiary of Jesus' sacrificial death.⁴⁸ The use of σάρξ in early Christian and Jewish literature often alludes to the material as opposed to the spiritual; "man in his...mortality."⁴⁹ Likewise, Odeberg considers John's use of σάρξ to connote Jesus' "earthly appearance," as it does in 1:14 and 3:16, 17.⁵⁰ Keener's semantic observations bring him to a similar conclusion; the typical term used in reference to the Eucharist in the first century would have been σῶμα (as in Mark 14:22, 1 Corinthians 11:24) rather than

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 225-6.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 241.

⁴⁸ Menken, 190.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 189-90.

⁵⁰ Odeberg, 261, Beasley-Murray, 94.

σὰρξ, the term used in the Discourse.⁵¹ The reason for John’s use of this term may have had to do with its more “natural” suggestions of sacrifice, and emphasis of Jesus’ incarnation in the flesh.⁵² Keener offers helpful insight, and denies that John’s use of αἷμα (verses 53-56) has solely Eucharistic connotations. Since, in Jewish teaching, blood contained the life of the body it inhabited, this language highlights the believer’s dependence upon Christ for life. Keener views this to be a much more natural interpretation in a Jewish setting than an overt allusion to the Eucharist.⁵³ Arriving at a similar conclusion, Dodd writes regarding verses 52-54: “...the expression δοῦναι τὴν σάρκα, however figuratively it is taken, can hardly fail to suggest the idea of death. And the expression πίνων μου τὸ αἷμα, again, can hardly fail to suggest shed blood, and therefore violent death.”⁵⁴

Menken, though noting possible Eucharistic overtones in verses 51-58, argues that these verses are, first and foremost, Christological. He contends that the ὑπὲρ formula in conjunction with ἡ σὰρξ μου earlier in verse 51 indicates focus on sacrifice, but could also suggest Eucharistic influence.⁵⁵ Admittedly, the connection between the Lord’s Supper and 6:27 is not as blatant. Menken concludes that John employs Eucharistic language in verses 51c-58, but “language derived from the celebration of the Eucharist can be used to make statements about subjects that have some relationship to the Eucharist, but are not identical

⁵¹ Keener, 690.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1953), 339.

⁵⁵ Menken, 187-8.

with it.”⁵⁶ In the John 6 Discourse, Jesus’ comparison of himself with bread, as well as his teaching regarding flesh and blood, provide poignant, specific information to the reader about his relationship with the believer.

Keener’s, Menken’s, and Dodd’s arguments all point to a Christological allusion made by the Evangelist, which, while it does not necessarily exclude the Eucharist, does not limit the teaching of verses 51c-58 to this concept. I agree with them, as I believe their research methods to be authentic examinations of the text, with strong linguistic and contextual arguments.

Arguments for the Unity of the Discourse

As we have discussed earlier, some scholars argue that the Discourse was partially written by a redactor. Rudolph Bultmann finds numerous phrases in the Discourse which he believes to be inserted by an editor, due to a seemingly abrupt change in content. For example, Bultmann writes that the phrase *καὶ γὰρ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ* in verse 44b appears to interrupt the flow of ideas presented in the rest of the verse.⁵⁷ However, I find that all of verse 44 leads rather seamlessly into the Old Testament quotation in verse 45. Verse 45 is an inherent component of the homiletic midrashic pattern, which Borgen claims, and I agree, the Discourse follows.⁵⁸ I also find the two verses to correspond logically, agreeing with Keener’s contention: “They could not come to Jesus without the Father’s enabling, Jesus claims, because Scripture promised that God’s

⁵⁶ Ibid., 188-9.

⁵⁷ Bultmann, 219-20.

⁵⁸ Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 40.

eschatological people would learn directly from him.”⁵⁹ For this reason, verses 37 and 44 are closely related. Verse 44 reinforces the πᾶν ὃ δίδωσίν μοι ὁ πατήρ by providing the opposite: οὐδεὶς δύναται... ἐὰν μὴ ὁ πατήρ ὁ πέμψας με ἐλκύσῃ αὐτόν.⁶⁰ I find that this relationship renders Bultmann’s argument for an “interruption of the flow of ideas” untenable.

Bultmann also believes the mention of final eschatology in verse 54 further proves that this section (51c-58) was added later.⁶¹ Though he acknowledges the logical placement of verse 54 in the discourse, Bultmann considers καὶ γὰρ ἀναστήσω αὐτὸν τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, with its “futuristic eschatology,” to be an insertion made by an editor, purposefully distributed throughout the discourse to render the entire Discourse supportive of the teachings in verses 51b-58.⁶² However, as Carson points out, Jesus mentions the second coming four verses later (5:28-29), and does so again in 14:3 and 21:22.⁶³ Though some scholars propose that these passages were added by a redactor, Carson writes “...the futuristic references [in John] are too widely scattered to be dismissed so arbitrarily.”⁶⁴ Beasley-Murray, in the same way, does not deem it necessary to attribute Jesus’ eschatological allusions to a redactor.⁶⁵

⁵⁹ Keener, 685.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 293.

⁶¹ Bultmann, 219.

⁶² Bultmann, 236.

⁶³ Carson, 276.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Beasley-Murray, 92.

Raymond Brown explains eschatological discrepancies by claiming that the Evangelist changes his eschatological emphasis depending upon his intended audience. Brown holds that the Evangelist focuses on realized eschatology in the Fourth Gospel, while he shifts to final eschatology in the Johannine Epistles. Following Brown's viewpoint, final judgment is a weightier topic in the Epistles because of the successionists' strong emphasis on realized eschatology. This led them to teach that after one came to faith, his way of life carried little significance—the judgment had already taken place for him. In 1 John, while the Evangelist does promote realized eschatology, he highlights the Christian's need to consider the reality of future judgement.⁶⁶

On the other hand, Brown believes that John stressed realized eschatology in the Gospel because of the Christians' conflict with Jewish authorities who were antagonistic toward the Christians' teaching around Christ's resurrection. It was not as crucial for the Evangelist to argue for future eschatology since the Pharisees stressed final judgment in their teaching. The Pharisees would have instead refuted a high Christology that claimed Jesus had ushered in the kingdom of God with his death and resurrection.⁶⁷

While I appreciate Raymond Brown's thoughts regarding John's varying eschatological emphases, I ultimately believe it is unnecessarily limiting to assume that the Evangelist could not hold realized and final eschatology in tension. I also disagree with Bultmann's argument for a redactor which are based on his perceived shift in the writer's eschatology. I prefer G. E. Ladd's more contemporary view of Johannine eschatology which does not dichotomize realized and futuristic eschatology. I also agree with

⁶⁶ Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John*, The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1982), 99.

⁶⁷ Brown, *Epistles*, 99.

W. F. Howard who similarly contends that the glory of God revealed in the person of Jesus is inherently indicative of requisite future consummation.⁶⁸

Ladd accurately displays that the Fourth Gospel, while emphasizing the present cosmic reality which has already been eschatologically affected by Christ's death and resurrection, does not abandon the Synoptic apocalyptic, horizontal eschatology; the concept of this age verses the age to come.⁶⁹ Ladd highlights emphasis on both realized and future resurrection in the Discourse itself: "For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him should have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." (6:40)⁷⁰ The present-tense θεωρῶν and πιστεύων are indicative of an emphasis on the here-and-now, while the Evangelist's use of αἰώνιος in 6:40, 47, and 54 (αἰώνιον) intrinsically suggests eschatology focused on the future, as it alludes to the "life of the age to come."⁷¹

In John 5:25, 28, 29 Jesus speaks of resurrection as *both* a future and present eschatological reality: "Truly, truly I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live....Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment."⁷² G. E. Ladd describes the conflation of present and

⁶⁸ G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids:William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 301.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 299.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 305.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 303.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 305.

future well: “This future judgment has reached back into the present in the person of Christ; and the future eschatological judgment will essentially be the execution of the sentence of condemnation that has in effect been determined on the basis of men’s response to the person of Christ here and now.”⁷³ Since the Evangelist clearly holds realized and futuristic eschatology in tension throughout multiple sections of the Fourth Gospel, it is not odd that he also does so in chapter 6.

In addition to his eschatological concerns, Bultmann believes that an editor intentionally attempted to connect verses 51c-58 with the earlier sections of the discourse by supplying a phrase from the “Johannine text” ὁ ἄρτος ὁ ἐξ οὐρανοῦ καταβάς in verse 58.⁷⁴ I find this to be an unsustainable argument from silence when compared to Borgen’s observations regarding repeated words throughout the Discourse. The last word of the Old Testament quotation in verse 31b, ἔφαγον, is not only reiterated in verse 58; it appears as early as verse 49, and it continues to be repeated throughout verses 49-58 since the topic of eating is the focal point of the discussion. This theme is not unique to verses 51c-58. Borgen regards this as evidence that verses 51c-58 were not added later by an editor (and I agree), since from verse 49 onwards, the verb “to eat” consistently provides the prominent exegetical theme.⁷⁵ This provides a substantial connection between verses 51-58 and previous portions of the Discourse, and presents a weightier argument than that of Bultmann.

⁷³ Ibid., 307.

⁷⁴ Bultmann, 236.

⁷⁵ Borgen, 35.

According to Bultmann, verses 22-51 express Christ as “the Revealer,” giving life to those who come to him or believe in him (verse 35), but the writer gives a different imperative in verses 51c-58. Bultmann thus concludes that there is no necessary sacramental action which must take place to appropriate the life offered by Christ in verses 27-51.⁷⁶ Rather, the Evangelist stresses “coming and believing,” and a correct understanding of ἐργάζεσθε as the singular ἔργα τοῦ θεοῦ.⁷⁷ Jesus’ use of the ἐγώ εἰμι formula in verse 35 is further indication of the emphasis on revelation in this section, as is his correction of the crowd’s understanding that the true bread from heaven came from Moses.⁷⁸ Bultmann assumes, on the other hand, that a literal sacramental action is being commanded in verses 51-58, and cites this as proof that verses 51-58 are an addendum.⁷⁹ I see this argument by Bultmann to present a false dichotomy.

David Mark Ball considers all of Jesus’ of ἐγώ εἰμι statements in John 6 and believes the relationship among these usages demonstrates the unity of chapter 6 as a whole.⁸⁰ Ball notes that the author’s interlacing of themes and phrases is distinctive of Johannine style and in the case of John 6, ἐγώ εἰμι is used heavily in this manner.⁸¹ The ἐγώ εἰμι phrase in verse 20 links the feeding episode to the Discourse, by means of combining the ἄρτος of verses 5, 7, 9, 11, 13 with the ἐγώ εἰμι in verse 20, as is seen in verses 35, 41, 48, 51 of the Discourse. Ball calls the ἐγώ εἰμι formula “...an intimate

⁷⁶ Bultmann, 219.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 221-2.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 225.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 234-5.

⁸⁰ Ball, 70.

⁸¹ Ibid., 78.

structure in which John introduces a theme and returns to it later in order to develop its meaning further.”⁸² Jesus uses ἐγὼ εἰμι to identify himself to his disciples the night before on the lake, and then in verse 35 to identify him as the sustenance provided by the Father for mankind.⁸³ The strategic position of the ἐγὼ εἰμι statement in verse 35 also provides resolution to the irony of the previous conversation, in which the crowd seeks physical bread but does not realize that what they actually desire and need is spiritual bread—Jesus himself. The climax, and full meaning of the ἐγὼ εἰμι formula occurs in verse 51, where Jesus explicitly states that he provides the world with essential, eternal nourishment.⁸⁴ This is also the view of Phillips, who considers verses 20, 34 and 51 to merely increase in the specificity of Jesus’ self-identification.⁸⁵ The strategic pattern developed simply by the Evangelist’s use of ἐγὼ εἰμι further indicates an overall cohesiveness to John 6, and does not support Bultmann’s hypothesis that verses 27-51 demand of the reader a different action than 51c-58. I therefore agree with Ball and Phillip, that the Evangelist’s use of the ἐγὼ εἰμι formula proves, rather than disproves, the unity of the Discourse.

Context: Would the Original Audience Have Related the Discourse to the Lord’s Supper?

⁸² Ibid., 70.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Gary A. Phillips, “‘This is a Hard Saying. Who Can Be Listener to It?’: Creating a Reader in John 6,” *Semeia*, 26 (1983): 50.

Whether or not the final section of the Discourse was a direct allusion to the Eucharist, I find it possible that the intended readers of John 6 would have associated the entire Discourse with the sacrament, since both the Discourse and the Christology surrounding the Supper are interconnected. I agree with Menken, who writes, “Even if the presupposition about the Eucharistic tenor of John 6:51c-58 is right...there is still the probability that for the Fourth Evangelist (and not only for him) belief in Jesus and participation in the Eucharist are not mutually exclusive.”⁸⁶ Menken considers it likely that the entire Discourse is Christological, but contains Eucharistic overtones that were probably intelligible to the original audience:

It is quite probable that a reader or hearer of this gospel...also thought of the Eucharist as the occasion when he or she experienced in a tangible way his or her belief in the crucified Jesus. However, John puts the Eucharist in its proper place by focusing on that which gives meaning to this sacrament: Jesus’ salvific death. John betrays no interest in church practices or structures in themselves; he tacitly presupposes them and concentrates on the person of Christ as their basis.⁸⁷

Noting the similarity between καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ (6:51) and Καὶ ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν λαβῶν ἄρτον εὐλογήσας ἔκλασεν, found in Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, and Matthew 26:26, Menken postulates that the Evangelist may have paraphrased Christ’s words from the Last Supper in the Synoptics, or that he at least had these accounts in mind as he wrote John 6.⁸⁸ I am in agreement with Menken—given this obvious similarity with the Synoptic accounts of the Supper, that the Evangelist, or even Jesus did not have the

⁸⁶ Menken, 187.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 202.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 187-8.

Lord's Supper in mind during the Discourse is difficult to prove.⁸⁹ Furthermore, Jesus would have been cognizant of his impending death as he taught at Capernaum. It is possible that he had already thought of instituting a meal commemorative of his death even at this point, especially since he had just held an impromptu Passover feast in the wilderness for the multitude. Recognition of this could explain an apparent reference to the Supper in verse 23 (εὐχαριστήσαντος τοῦ κυρίου).⁹⁰

The Fourth Gospel records Jesus' fluid movement between the literal and figurative not only in John 6, but also chapter 4 during Jesus' dialogue with the woman at the well. Additionally, noting the rich Christological statement in verse 55: "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed...", any attempt to completely separate Christology from religious practice seems contrived, especially noting that the primitive church was practicing the Lord's Supper regularly before the composition of the Fourth Gospel. I concur with Menken, that this participation in the Lord's Supper would have removed the offense associated with the language of eating someone's flesh and drinking their blood as was expressed in Jewish law (Leviticus 17:10-14) and Ezekiel 39:17.⁹¹

Numerous sources indicate the antiquity of the Lord's Supper, which I shall enumerate below. The first example I shall present, however, is less tenable. Odeberg finds a remarkable similarity between Mandaean ideas around the sacramental *pihta* (bread) and the Johannine concept of heavenly bread.⁹² In the Mandaean religion, the *pihta*, along with water (*Mambula*) would be given to one at his baptism, while the congregation was given

⁸⁹ Menken, 188, Morris, 314, and Godet, 40-1.

⁹⁰ Godet, 41-2.

⁹¹ Menken, 188.

⁹² Odeberg, 247.

bread and water. Odeberg suggests that the parallelism between this ceremony and the Eucharist could provide information on the relationship between the two,⁹³ given the Mandaean concepts of the *pihta*'s association with spiritual qualities, which are similar to those believed to be present in the Eucharist.⁹⁴ However, since the earliest extant Mandaean documents are dated significantly later than the Fourth Gospel, and would not have influenced the Evangelist,⁹⁵ this similarity does not necessarily speak to the discussion on authorial intent in the Bread of Life Discourse.

One of the more overt and much more feasible evidences of the Supper's antiquity lies in the account of Jesus' Institution of the Supper in Synoptics and Pauline Epistles, demonstrating that by A.D. 90 when the Fourth Gospel was published, the early Christian community regularly practiced a communal meal. The earliest explanation of the Supper regarding the bread and wine as Jesus' body and blood is found in Mark 1 and 1 Corinthians 11.⁹⁶

Paul first refers to the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:20-33, the first place where it is called by this name: "When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat..."⁹⁷ In 1 Corinthians 10:3 Paul likened the Israelites' eating manna in the desert (c.f. 6:31b) to the contemporary practice of the Lord's Supper. Paul would not have been alluding to John's Discourse, given 1 Corinthians' date of composition. However, since

⁹³ Ibid., 248.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Brown, *Gospel*, LV.

⁹⁶ Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 117.

⁹⁷ LaVerdiere, 2.

verse 31b is the central expositional text of the Bread of Life Discourse, I conclude that the common referent to this historical event between Corinthians and the Discourse implies a shared theme between the two; the spiritual food that is Christ. The manner in which Paul writes about the Supper here seems to suggest that it was well known and commonly practiced among Christians when he composed this letter.⁹⁸ Some scholars propose a composition date for 1 Corinthians in the mid-fifties. Acts 18:12 records the Jews' attack on Paul during the early years of Gallio's proconsulship, which most likely took place in A.D. 51. From there, the dating of 1 Corinthians can be constructed by following the events in Paul's life; his trip to Syria took place in the spring of 52, and then he spent two and a half years spent in Ephesus, during which time he wrote 1 Corinthians, prior to Pentecost (as is indicated in 16:8). This would position the probable composition date of 1 Corinthians early in the year 55,⁹⁹ over 30 years prior to the composition of the Gospel of John, given the Gospel's composition date in the early 90s. Therefore, both the Synoptics and 1 Corinthians, both indicating a widespread practice of the Lord's Supper in the churches to whom they wrote, would have had time to circulate throughout the early church before the Evangelist penned the Fourth Gospel.

Luke also alludes to the Supper in Acts 2:46: "And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts..."¹⁰⁰ The similarities between Luke and Acts seem to indicate that Luke considered

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ D.A. Carson and Douglass Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 448, also William Barrett Frankland, *The Early Eucharist (A.D. 30-180)* (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1902), 30.

¹⁰⁰ Oscar Cullmann, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper in Primitive Christianity," in *Essays on the Lord's Supper*, trans. J.G. Davies (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 9.

them to be a set, and the suggested dates for the Gospel range between A.D. 60 and 90.¹⁰¹ However, if the Gospel and Acts were composed much later than 60, the lack of reference to the death of both James (A.D. 62) and Paul (A.D. 67) in both books would be odd, so it is likely to some that they were written prior to these events. Also unfitting for a later compositional date would be Luke's taciturnity regarding the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, especially considering the books' emphasis on fulfillment of prophecy.¹⁰² This positions the date of Luke's Gospel thirty years prior to that of John's Gospel.

Given these prior Scriptural references, it is probable that the Lord's Supper came to mind for the early Christians when they read John 6. Beasley-Murray writes, "...it is evident that neither the Evangelist nor the Christian readers could have written or read the saying without conscious reference to the Eucharist; to say the least, they would have acknowledged it as supremely fulfilled in the worship event."¹⁰³ Even though first-century Christians were practicing the Lord's Supper before the Fourth Gospel was finished, there is no actual evidence to prove whether the Discourse was meant to teach about the Lord's Supper, or vice versa. However, there is a remarkable overlap in the Christology displayed in each. Christ is held out to the believer as food and drink for the believer's sustenance; food of which the believer must actively partake in faith. This is a shared concept between the Discourse and the Supper of which the early Christians would have been well aware. Therefore, a fitting assessment would be that both the Lord's Supper and the Discourse

¹⁰¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The IVP New Testament Commentary, ed. Grant R. Osborne (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 18-19.

¹⁰² Bock, 19.

¹⁰³ Beasley-Murray, 95.

work together to teach about Christ. As Carson suggests,¹⁰⁴ I believe that the Supper teaches, in a tangible way, about the truths communicated in the Bread of Life Discourse, and at the same time, the Discourse instructs us on what is given to the believer when he eats and drinks of Christ.

The sometimes perplexing and ambiguous nature of Jesus' homily at Capernaum in John 6 has caused disagreements regarding not only the interpretation of Jesus' words, but also the integrity of the entire discourse. As I have shown in this chapter, some of the traditional contentions for the disunity of 6:22-58 collapse under consideration of the homiletic structure of the Discourse, the vocabulary used throughout the entire Discourse, the movement of Jesus' teaching from general to specific, and the perceived needs of John's intended audience. When one considers Jesus' situation as he gave the Discourse, on a Passover soon before his death, it is not out of the question that he could, in fact, have thought of the Eucharistic meal he would soon initiate, just as it is not improbable that the Discourse in its entirety would not have brought to mind the Lord's Supper which the original audience was already practicing when the Fourth Gospel was composed. Therefore, I agree with scholars such as Godet,¹⁰⁵ Tasker, Mathison, Calvin, and Augustine who believe that the Discourse and the Supper are, in fact, indirectly related. I believe the Christological connections between the Bread of Life Discourse and the Lord's Supper likely worked together to serve the early church in the same way they serve us today: to teach believers, intellectually and experientially, about the blessings the believer receives from Christ

¹⁰⁴ Carson, *Gospel*, 280.

¹⁰⁵ Godet, 41.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT IS COMMUNICATED TO THE BELIEVER IN THE LORD'S SUPPER?

The Bread of Life Discourse teaches that Jesus' authority and union with the Father enables him to communicate benefits to the believer. Some scholars argue that this is realized for Christians most concretely through the Lord's Supper, where the believer tangibly and mysteriously experiences the promises of Christ described in John 6.¹ In this chapter, we will explore the nature of the believer's encounter, through faith, with the flesh and blood of Jesus as it is described in John 6, and in regards to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This task will involve not only a detailed examination of the benefits held forth in John 6 to the one who partakes of Christ, but also an investigation of the sacrament itself.

The research of Eduard Schweizer explores possible varying emphases in the sacrament's practice in the early church. He cites Hans Lietzmann's 1926 study which presented two distinct types of Lord's Supper celebrations in the early church. The Galilean, or "Jerusalem type", centered on the fellowship of eating together, and it was rooted in the meals Jesus shared with his disciples.² This meal later became a celebratory

¹ Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press 1998), 223-4. Also R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. John*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: The Tyndale Press, 1976), 96.

² Eduard Schweizer, *The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament*, trans. James M. Davis (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 23.

love-feast eaten in certain expectation of the Resurrection, centering on the belief that Christ was spiritually present among its participants.³ Cullmann hypothesizes that this κοινωνία emphasis of the Lord's Supper partially explains the Evangelist's omission of the Last Supper account in his Gospel, though it is included in the Synoptics. In John 6, the Evangelist, rather, alludes to the Lord's Supper by describing the miraculous fellowship meal of Christ with his disciples.⁴ According to the research of G. P. Wetter, this concept of the Lord's Supper as fellowship later came to be prevalent in the Byzantine liturgy of the Lord's Supper. In this setting, as the elements were lifted a prayer would be spoken, "Come, Thou who art seated on high with the Father, and who art invisibly present among us."⁵ This is similar to the Pauline "Maranatha!" of 1 Corinthians 16:22.⁶ Lietzmann claims that a Western, "Pauline" Lord's Supper celebration, influenced more by the sacrificial ideas of first-century Hellenism, emphasized the propitiatory death of Jesus Christ.⁷

Lietzmann and Cullmann attempt to explain the discrepancies between the liturgies of the Lord's Supper in the Eastern and Western Church through the presentation of this dichotomy. However, Schweizer reasonably argues that the first-century church would have been more unified in their sacramental theology: "...it is impossible to establish the existence of two wholly distinct and independent types of the Lord's Supper in the early church...If these two factors...did not belong together from the very beginning, then they

³ Oscar Cullmann, "The Meaning of the Lord's Supper in Primitive Christianity," in *Essays on the Lord's Supper*, trans. J. G. Davies (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 12.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁷ Schweizer, 23.

must certainly have merged very early in the Palestinian church.”⁸ The practice of the Lord’s Supper during the first Easter celebration would have likely looked toward not only the hope of fellowship with the risen Lord (made apparent in the description of the eschatological joy in Acts 2:46),⁹ but also his sacrificial death.¹⁰

Whether fellowship with Christ or his propitiatory death was the focus believers in the early church, it has been recognized in numerous confessions of faith that something spiritual takes place during the Lord’s Supper. Neither aspect of the Lord’s Supper highlighted in Schweizer’s and Cullmann’s research denies the reality of Christ’s actual presence in the sacrament, as is described in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The authors of this confession confirm the spiritual presence of Christ in the Supper and necessity of the believer’s faith in order to experience his presence:

Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses. (29.6)¹¹

The reality of Christ’s presence in the Supper, and the benefits of one’s believing reception of Christ expressed in John 6 are also vividly highlighted in chapter 21 of Bullinger’s *Second Helvetic Confession*:

⁸ Ibid., 25.

⁹ Ibid., 34; Cullmann, 8.

¹⁰ Schweizer, 27.

¹¹ *Westminster Confession of Faith*, accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.pcaac.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/WCFScriptureProofs>, 29.6.

There is also a spiritual eating of Christ's body; not such that we think that thereby the food itself is to be changed into spirit, but whereby the body and blood of the Lord, while remaining in their own essence and property, are spiritually communicated to us, certainly not in a corporeal but in a spiritual way, by the Holy Spirit, who applies and bestows upon us these things which have been prepared for us by the sacrifice of the Lord's body and blood for us, namely, the remission of sins, deliverance, and eternal life; so that Christ lives in us and we live in him, and he causes us to receive him by true faith to this end that he may become for us such spiritual food and drink, that is, our life.¹²

Each of these confessions speak of a mysterious but real transmission taking place during the Supper. This concept would not have been foreign to the first-century Jewish audience of John. Rather, as they heard the words of the Bread of Life Discourse and practiced the Lord's Supper in the early church, their traditions and understanding of the Old Testament would have encouraged them to believe that something was communicated to them through that substance. I shall first provide evidence that the original audience's knowledge of Old Testament feast references would have informed their understanding of the Lord's Supper. Following this, I will review the responsibilities of the believer described in the Discourse, as well as the benefits promised him by Christ, and explore whether and how this relates to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The concept of eating and drinking as a spiritual act carried significance which would have been familiar to first-century Jews at the institution of the Lord's Supper. Throughout the Old Testament, the Israelites' eschatological hope grew organically as their hope in humanity's successful maintenance of a relationship with God declined.¹³ The Hebrew understanding of God's

¹² *The Second Helvetic Confession*, accessed September 6, 2017, <https://www.ccel.org/creeds/helvetic.htm>.

¹³ Scott McCormick, *The Lord's Supper: A Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966), 94.

acts toward man emphasized God's provision and man's dependence: he "gives and sustains all life and brings his purpose to sure fruition."¹⁴ This concept is displayed in passages such as Isaiah 55:2: "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food."¹⁵ Amos 9:13-15 and Isaiah 40:11 similarly promises God's abundant provision of food for Israel. Numbers 14:8; Psalm 34:10, Psalm 23:5, Proverbs 10:3, Isaiah 1:19, and Isaiah 58:11 hold out God's blessing of food and sustenance as indicative of his favor. Scott McCormick Jr. outlines some of the prominent Old Testament ideas around Old Testament feasting with God, and God's provision of food for his people:

- (1) God's provision of sufficient or copious amounts of food was a sign of his favor
- (2) Communion with God was enhanced or imparted by eating and drinking, and God could actually use these modes, as he willed, to affect to the one who partook.
- (3) God was the principal provider of all gifts.
- (4) The faith of the believer played a necessary role in the reception of God's communion and blessings.¹⁶

Futuristic Messianic feasting is also a prevalent theme throughout the Old Testament looking forward to an event where God's Messiah would "restore Israel and feed them abundantly."¹⁷ Ezekiel 34:23-24 and Zechariah 9:17 specifically look forward to God's sending of a Messiah who would feed his people.¹⁸ Given the rich imagery in the Old Testament presenting the Messiah as a provider of food for the people of God, it would

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 95.

¹⁶ Ibid., 97.

¹⁷ Ibid., 93.

¹⁸ Ibid., 94.

not have been surprising for the original audience that John would apply this concept of Messianic feeding to Jesus, and the celebration of the Lord's Supper also echoes this concept.

It is incumbent upon us now to struggle through precisely what the Lord's Supper means for the participants themselves and to specify the nature of the spiritual benefits held forth in the Supper. My treatment of the subject of the Lord's Supper will rely, in part, upon a Reformed understanding of the sacrament, since the Reformed framework approaches the sacrament in a manner that is congruent with the teachings of John 6. John Calvin developed much of his sacramental theology through his reading of the Bread of Life Discourse. The Discourse lists numerous gifts imparted to the believer upon his partaking of Christ. However, to conclude that the actual benefits described in the Supper are actually and only communicated to the believer upon his partaking of the Supper based on a reading of 6:51-58 would be problematic, since this would contradict the earlier portion of the Discourse (verses 35, 37, 40, 44, 45, 47), which instructs the reader to "come to," "look upon," and "believe in" Christ, rather than "eat and drink" of his "flesh and blood."¹⁹ This would also contradict Acts 16:31 and Romans 10:9-10, which indicate that genuine belief in Christ is necessary for salvation; no external action is required. Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper does not assume that John 6 requires such tangible actions as eating and drinking for salvation, but that external sacraments such as baptism and the Lord's Supper are not salvific in themselves but confirm to the believer his salvation.

¹⁹ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John, The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 297.

In his *Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, John Calvin expresses the purpose of the sacrament as follows:

...to sign and seal in our consciences the promises contained in his gospel concerning our being made partakers of his body and blood, and to give us certainty and assurance that therein lies our true spiritual nourishment, and that having such an earnest, we may entertain a right reliance on salvation.²⁰

Calvin states here that the primary benefits offered by the Supper are not the promises themselves but rather the *assurance* of these benefits through Christ. It is Christ himself that is held forth in the Lord's Supper, and through him, divine benefits are extended to the believer. This is also the position supported by this paper. In his *Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, Calvin states "The gift [offered in the sacrament] is not to be identified with the benefits of Christ...first and foremost the gift is Jesus Christ himself, who is their source."²¹ Since it is Christ himself that is offered in the Lord's Supper, and he communes with believers through the Holy Spirit, it would be false to assume that the benefits held forth in the Supper could not be experienced outside of the celebration of the sacrament.²² Schlesinger rightly states: "Feeding upon Christ simply is the Christian life. It is not confined to the sacrament, but it is nevertheless realized in the sacrament."²³

²⁰ John Calvin, *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, Christian Classics, trans. J.K. Reid (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1954), 144.

²¹ Eugene R. Schlesinger, "Use Your Allusion: How Reformed Sacramental Theology Makes Sense of Sacramental Language in John 3 and 6," *Westminster Theological Journal* 74 (2012): 362.

²² *Ibid.*, 364.

²³ *Ibid.*

Again, I must reiterate Carson's²⁴ and Menken's²⁵ accurate shared view that both the John 6 discourse and the Supper are Christological; rather than one pointing to the other, they both showcase Christ and his redemptive works. Menken correctly highlights the Evangelist's alternation between σάρκα ... αἶμα in verses 53-56 with ἐμέ (verse 57) to argue that this phrase refers to Jesus himself rather than the elements.²⁶ Menken also argues that Jesus' ἐγώ εἰμι statement in verse 35 proves that Jesus speaks metaphorically when referring to eating the bread of life, since his self-identification with the bread is also ultimately metaphorical. However, if in receiving the Lord's Supper, the partaker does so in faith, therefore "coming and believing," then to eat of the elements is, in fact, to eat of Christ.

Although Jesus does not, in John 6, command his followers to literally eat his flesh and drink his blood, their actual partaking of Christ and his imparting of the assurance of his promises is real. The "source and substance of all good,"²⁷ and the "...fruit and efficacy of [Christ's] death and passion"²⁸ are truly presented to believers in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, which offers assurance brought about by the Holy Spirit. Calvin compares the spiritual benefits offered in the elements to the descending Spirit of God in John 1:32, arguing that the presence of the Spirit was no less real in this instance simply

²⁴ Carson, 280.

²⁵ Maarten J.J. Menken, "John 6:51-58 Eucharist or Christology?" in *Critical Readings of John 6*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1997), 184.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

²⁷ Calvin, 146.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

because it had taken on a form visible to man.²⁹ In the same way the elements offer the believer, through Christ, a “visible sign of invisible grace,” as they partake of them in faith.

To Partake is to “Come and Believe”

Perhaps the reason the Evangelist does not apologize for the seemingly crude language of eating Christ’s flesh and drinking his blood in verses 51c-58 is because something much more profound than literal eating is being conveyed in these verses. As I mentioned earlier, the contemporary practice of the Lord’s Supper in the early church is likely the reason John’s audience would not have been offended by Jesus’ gruesome depiction in verse 51c. While partaking of the Supper with faith, the believer is, in effect, following Jesus’ instruction in the Discourse to “come and eat.” McCormick writes,

These are the eucharistic actions—the blessing and offering of the elements, on the one hand, and the acceptance of them on the other—without which the sacrament would be no sacrament. Its vitality includes the words and actions together. And as the bread and wine signify the gift of salvation issuing from Jesus’ obedience, one’s faithful consumption of them means one’s real reception of that gift and one’s equally real involvement in that obedience.³⁰

Calvin viewed believing and eating as inextricably bound together: “...we eat Christ’s flesh in believing, because it is made ours by faith, and that this eating is the result and effect of faith.”³¹ This is seconded by Schweizer: “According to 6:51-58...the only way Jesus can be appropriated is through the faith of which the whole Bread Discourse speaks from v. 26 on. This is corroborated by 6:56, which reckons solely with an eating

²⁹ John Calvin, *Tracts and Treatises of John Calvin in 3 Volumes*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2002), 1:171.

³⁰ McCormick, 31.

³¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1365.

and drinking unto salvation, not to damnation...”³² The “true reception” is to “come and believe” and “eat and drink.” The Evangelist’s interchangeable use of these instructions in John 6 shows that they are one and the same. Though in verses 53-56 the believer is promised life when he eats (φάγητε) Christ, this statement is preceded by verses 35-50 wherein Jesus exhorts his hearers toward “coming” and “believing.”³³ The one who does this is, as I mentioned before, assured of the benefits described in John 6:35, 37, 39, 40, 44, 47, 50, 51, 54, 55, 56, and 58.

Belief (πιστεύω) in the Discourse implies more than intellectual assent. It is to fully accept a new disclosure of God in the crucified Christ. The Evangelist emphasizes this with the backdrop of the Passover. Moloney frames this well: “As once Israel ate of the manna in the desert and was nourished by adhesion to the Law given at Sinai, so now the world is summoned to accept the further revelation of God in the broken body and spilled blood of Jesus.”³⁴ In the Discourse, the Evangelist specifically urges his audience to place their faith in this revelation of God as he juxtaposes the Passover with the vivid imagery of receiving Christ; God’s final and complete means of salvation for his people.

In addition to this, John highlights Jesus as new revelation in 6:45, “...and they will all be taught by God.” The Evangelist here quotes Isaiah 54:13, showing that the prophecy of the restored Jerusalem is ultimately fulfilled in the establishment of the Messianic community; those who are “drawn by God.”³⁵ Borgen argues that this verse hearkens back

³² Schweizer, 34.

³³ Raymond Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, 2nd ed., The Anchor Bible, ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1981), 292.

³⁴ Moloney, 222.

³⁵ Carson, 293.

to the concepts of Torah and wisdom as the Evangelist alludes to the Israelites' encounter with God at Sinai: "The midrashic formula of "I am" receives in this context the force of the self-predication of wisdom with overtones from God's theophanic presentation of Himself."³⁶ By referencing the prevailing Old Testament teaching that the Messianic age would be marked by God's direct teaching of his people, Jesus highlights that he is the One sent by God, the prophet better than Moses.³⁷ At the celebration of the Lord's Supper the believer is called to physically express his acceptance of this revelation of God in the tangible action of eating, which represents taking Christ into his innermost being, and also participation in God's covenant, mediated through Jesus: "Having been presented with these divinely-appointed elements, it is incumbent upon him to make a decision for or against the covenant they represent, gaining or losing life because of it."³⁸ When one partakes of the Lord's Supper, he is declaring that he is part of God's covenant community, having accepted God's revelation in Jesus Christ.³⁹ Eating and drinking the elements of the Lord's Supper is, therefore, a covenantal act.

The Old Testament consistently includes meal-sharing in accounts of covenant establishment and participation. Old Testament illustrations of abundant feeding and salvation from God's hand are framed consistently within the context of obedient

³⁶ Peder Borgen, *Bread from Heaven: An Exegetical Study of the Concept of Manna in the Gospel of John and the Writings of Philo* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1965), 157.

³⁷ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), 1:239.

³⁸ Moloney, 224.

³⁹ McCormick, 106.

recipients, listing the obligations of God's people and God's previous gracious actions toward them. Joel 2:26-27 speaks of God's provision for the Israelites in such a context:

You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the LORD your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame. You shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the LORD your God and there is none else. And my people shall never again be put to shame.

Furthermore, covenants between God and man throughout the Old Testament included a fellowship meal, as was common in the Ancient Near East (Genesis 9:3, Exodus 12; 24:9-11). Within the context of the Tabernacle, the "bread of the Presence," an offering to God, signified covenant relationship (Numbers 4:7, Leviticus 24:8). The peace offering, wherein the priests and congregation ate of the meal and then burned part as an offering to God, was also covenantal, as it was eaten in view of reconciliation with God (Leviticus 7:11-18; 19:5-8, Deuteronomy 27:7).⁴⁰ Upon reading the Bread of Life Discourse, John's audience would have had these images in the back of their minds, with an eschatological understanding of Jesus' commands to eat and drink. They would have viewed their obedience to these imperatives as participation in the new covenant of God.⁴¹

The Father Has Set His Seal on Jesus

In 6:27, Jesus shows that he has the prerogative to communicate benefits to the one who "comes and believes," since God has given him the authority to do so: "Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal (ἐσφράγισεν)." The range

⁴⁰ John Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 2013), 1068.

⁴¹ Ibid.

of meaning for σφραγίζω includes (1) “to use a seal to close or make something secure, to seal, to put a seal on, to make secure,”⁴² (2) “the accusative of the object that is to be secured or fastened by the seal: of a stone, to prevent its being moved...”⁴³ (3) “to seal for oneself, have sealed,” (4) “to mark as with a seal, to mark” (5) “to seal or accredit as a faithful servant, as a believer.” (6) “to set a seal on, confirm, stamp with approval...to assure of a thing.” In the LXX, σφραγίζω is used in 1 Kings 20:8, Esther 8:8, and Isaiah 8:16 to translate the root סתם, in reference to sealing of a letter or testimony. The most appropriate definition in the case of 6:27 is that of “confirmation” or “approval.”⁴⁴ I agree with Morris’ comparison of ἐσφράγισεν in verse 27 to the practice commonly used in antiquity of attaching a seal to a document. This not only marked the document as owned by the one who sealed it; it also assured the reader of the document’s authenticity; that the sealer endorsed the message contained in the document.⁴⁵ In this way, I am promoting a metaphorical understanding, in which Jesus is “confirmed, marked with [God’s] approval.”⁴⁶ Keener also compares this language to the use of the seal by a merchant from antiquity who wished to convey the “...character of an item’s contents.”⁴⁷ In 6:27, Jesus indicates that the Father has set his approval on him, guaranteeing his divine nature and

⁴² Johannes E. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, ed., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), “σφραγίζω.”

⁴³ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 796.

⁴⁴ Henry George Liddell, et. al., *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1940), “σφραγίζω.”

⁴⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 318.

⁴⁶ Liddell, “σφραγίζω.”

⁴⁷ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrikson Publishers, 2003), 1:677.

authority. This is similar to his use of σφραγίζω in 3:33, wherein ἐσφράγισεν describes the believer as having testified the truth of God from within himself. In 6:27, however, it is God who testifies to Jesus' authority and guarantees Jesus' words.⁴⁸

Barrett,⁴⁹ Morris,⁵⁰ and Godet⁵¹ see the final ὁ θεός in verse 27 as an emphasis of God's stamp of approval on Jesus' role and mission. The τοῦτον included in τοῦτον γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἐσφράγισεν ὁ θεός is also sometimes used to further emphasize its referent.⁵² Moloney highlights the distinction of Jesus' divinity shown in John's employment of the more emphatic τοῦτον in τοῦτον γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἐσφράγισεν ὁ θεός.⁵³ All of these details support the divine "stamp of approval" interpretation of σφραγίζω; Jesus has been given divine authority by the Father, which guarantees his ability and authority to impart to the believer and assure him of the profound gifts of sustenance, eternal life, security, and life-giving union with him. As I stated earlier, the believer is granted these benefits upon believing in Christ, and guaranteed of them through the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper as a Seal

Calvin viewed the sacrament of the Lord's Supper ultimately to be a "seal" of God's promise toward the partaker; one which enables him to tangibly experience the spiritual

⁴⁸ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 287.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Morris, 318.

⁵¹ Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John with an Historical and Critical Introduction*, trans. Timothy Dwight 3rd ed., (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1893), 2:19.

⁵² Barbara Friberg, Timothy Friberg, Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), "οὔτος."

⁵³ Moloney, 211.

things he gives to us in Christ. He fittingly regarded the Lord's Supper as "a visible sign of invisible grace," in the same way that Paul describes Abraham's circumcision in Romans 4:11; "...a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised."⁵⁴ That an outward human act can also act as a seal is consistent with the Pauline concept expressed in Romans, as well as the Evangelist's use of σφραγίζω in 6:27. In Romans 4:11, Paul considered circumcision to be a sign, which identified Abraham and his offspring as the people of God. This divinely appointed mark was not salvific in itself, but attested to the recipients being God's own covenant children.⁵⁵

The importance of the believer's responsibility is in view here as well. Abraham's justification did not come through his circumcision; in Romans 4:11 Paul asserts that the circumcision was given to him as a result of his faith in God. Without Abraham's faith preceding it, justification through the covenant would not have been realized, rendering the sign of circumcision void. The same is true for the promises presented in John 6; faith—truly "coming and believing"—is necessary for the believer to experience assurance of the promises. This faith consists of accepting and relying on the work of Christ: "...we eat Christ, properly and redemptively, only when we eat him crucified and when we grasp the effectual working of his death with a lively awareness."⁵⁶

Calvin considered this view to be supported by 1 Corinthians 12:13 as well. The Lord's Supper is "a sign of the body and blood of Christ and our union and communion

⁵⁴ Keith Mathison, *Given for You* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2002), 270.

⁵⁵ John Stott, *The Message of Romans: God's Good News for the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 129. Also F.F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 110.

⁵⁶ Herman Bavinck, "Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper," trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman, *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 19 (2008): 131.

with him in that it is a seal of the promise that we truly partake of the body and blood of Christ whenever we partake of the Supper in faith.”⁵⁷ Calvin states: “...the sacraments are truly called testimonies of the grace of God, and as it were certain seals of the good will which he beareth towards us; which by sealing it unto us, do, by this means, sustain, nourish, confirm, and increase our faith.”⁵⁸ Calvin interprets the Corinthian passage by saying that the damage done by those who profane the Lord’s Supper is not that they strip the sacrament of the grace it communicates; rather, it affects the testimony the Supper bears for those who partake.⁵⁹

The covenant sealing of the believer in the Lord’s Supper is directly dependent upon the seal God has placed on Christ. Since God has placed the seal of his authentication on Jesus, it follows that when the believer partakes of Christ, he is also partaking of that seal, which is a guarantor of the promises communicated through Christ to him. Therefore, one can have confidence in Jesus’ words in verses 39-40: “And this is the will of Him who sent me, in order that I should lose nothing out of all he has given to me, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him might have eternal life, and I will raise him up [on] the last day.” Ultimately, it is the faithfulness of Christ, and the testimony of God toward him, which is

⁵⁷ Mathison, 273.

⁵⁸ John Calvin, *A Treatise on the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper* (Edinburgh: John Johnston, 1837), 8.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

salvific.⁶⁰ As this applies to the Lord's Supper, it is through the work of the Holy Spirit, that the one who truly partakes of Christ is sealed with the promises presented in John 6.⁶¹

Jesus Christ Provides True Sustenance

That Jesus is the truest nourishment is emphasized in the structure of the Discourse. As Borgen has shown in his research, the entire Discourse is designed to be an exposition of the Old Testament quote in verse 31b, "He gave them bread from heaven to eat," and the latter section of the Discourse which focuses on an explanation of the verb "to eat (φαγεῖν)"⁶² The verb φαγεῖν is emphasized in verse 49 onwards, and especially in verses 51-58.⁶³ The overall thrust of Jesus' argument is that he is the true Bread, providing the most authentic nourishment to those who believe in him; nourishment that is so profoundly complete that the Old Testament manna pales in comparison.

Because of Jesus' divinity, only he is able to satisfy the crowd's deepest need. In verses 32-35, Jesus begins his exposition of 31b by addressing the crowds' misconception that the manna given to the Israelites through Moses was from Moses; rather, it was from God. Leon Morris shows that the identification of the bread from heaven as "true" indicates a negation at two different levels—the source of the bread, and the scope of its purpose: (1) The rabbis often referred to Torah as bread, and Jesus' statement in verse 35 juxtaposes Jesus as the Bread from heaven with the Jews' conception of the Law. Along these lines, Morris mentions that verse 32 can be rephrased as a question: "Did not Moses give you

⁶⁰ Carson, 291.

⁶¹ Mathison, 271.

⁶² Borgen, 35.

⁶³ Ibid.

bread from heaven? (Yes, indeed. But the father gives you the true bread from heaven).”⁶⁴

(2) Jesus’ phrase in verse 51, “behalf of the [life of the world].” shows the breadth of this feeding by the ἄρτος τῆς ζωῆς. All who “come to,” “believe in,” and “partake of” Jesus receive not a one-time feeding, but one that is ongoing; this makes the bread Jesus offers not only superior to that of the manna, since it is the truest form of sustenance and feeds one forever rather than just one day; it is also the fulfillment of the manna, feeding not only the Israelites but the whole world.⁶⁵

Jesus indicates in verses 32 and 55 that the food he offers is “true” food. The descriptor ἀληθινόν in verse 32 sets Christ apart as Bread from the manna given to the Israelite ancestors (31b).⁶⁶ The Bread from heaven described by Jesus is not a material bread that the people could handle and eat. It is actually Christ.⁶⁷ Jesus inherently has the life of the Father within him since the Father lives in him (6:57), and he is therefore able to give life to those who partake of him (6:51, 53). The Old Testament manna was not “true” bread in this sense, as it had no life in itself, and therefore could only sustain the Israelites for a limited amount of time; “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died” (6:49). The function of the manna was to point to the true Bread that would come; that which contains the life of God. Jesus’ statement that he is the Bread of Life not only alludes to his divinity; it differentiates the eternal sustenance of his salvific work from the finite provision of the food provided through Moses.

⁶⁴ Morris, 322.

⁶⁵ Moloney, 212.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Morris, 323.

The range of meaning for Jesus' aforementioned adjective ἀληθινόν (6:32) includes: (1) a modifier of words or testimonies that are congruent with facts (John 4:18, 4:37, 5:31, 5:32, 8:13, 8:14, 8:17, 10:41, 19:35, 21:24), (2) that which is quintessentially authentic (John 1:9; 3:21;⁶⁸4:23, 8:16, 8:26, 15:1, 17:3), (3) a person with integrity (John 8:26, 17:3).⁶⁹ In the context of 6:32 and 55, Jesus states that he is the most authentic, genuine nourishment.⁷⁰

Keener considers the adjectival form, ἀληθής in verse 55 to be most consistent with the original text.⁷¹ However, Ridderbos,⁷² and Moloney⁷³ translate the term as “indeed.” believing the adverbial form, ἀληθῶν, to be more accurate due to weightier textual evidence of Sinaiticus, Bezae, Koridethi, Athos, Old Latin, Vulgate, Sinaitic Syriac, Curetonian Syriac, and Peshitta. Calvin also supports the adverbial rendering “indeed.”⁷⁴ In addition to the textual evidence, the adverbial form is used in multiple instances throughout the Fourth Gospel, such as in 1:47; 4:42; 6:14; 7:40; 8:31. These occurrences of the term more fully illuminate its meaning in John 6: “My flesh and blood really are what food and drink should be, they fulfill the ideal, archetypal function of food and

⁶⁸ Brown, 148.

⁶⁹ Friberg, “ἀληθινός.”

⁷⁰ Keener, 682.

⁷¹ Ibid., 691.

⁷² Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 243.

⁷³ Moloney, 225.

⁷⁴ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press), 2:1960, 1363⁷⁴

drink...giving eternal life to those who receive them.”⁷⁵ As Moloney expounds, “This is the authentic bread that is and does all that it claims to be and do.”⁷⁶

This particular employment of the term “true,” as a descriptor of Christ is typical to such usage throughout the Fourth Gospel, ⁷⁷ and usually carries eschatological connotations. The Evangelist also describes Jesus as the “true light”⁷⁸ compared to John the Baptist (1:9), which, like his modifier in 6:32, 55, carries the meaning of the “real” or “genuine” light.⁷⁹ The main thrust of John’s argument in 1:9 as he describes Christ in this way also confirms eschatological overtones; Jesus is the “...full revelation of God’s truth.” By describing Jesus as the “true Bread,” “true Light” and “true Vine,” John is not saying that God’s previous revelations of his relationship with his covenant people are false; rather, they were meant to look forward to their ultimate fulfillment in Christ.⁸⁰

The imagery of “true vine” (15:1),⁸¹ similarly, carries connotations of eschatological fulfillment. In the Isaiah 5 “Song of the Vineyard,” the prophet presents Israel as God’s vineyard, which God had diligently and lovingly tended, but yielded no harvest. Therefore, God determined to put another nation in Israel’s place, with Jesus as the new Vine, and as the mediator between God and man.⁸² The nourishment held forth

⁷⁵ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 95. Also Barrett, 299.

⁷⁶ Moloney, 212.

⁷⁷ Keener, 682.

⁷⁸ Carson, 122.

⁷⁹ Brown, 9.

⁸⁰ Carson, 122.

⁸¹ Keener, 682.

⁸² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 448.

by Christ is more genuine and true because it accomplishes something deeper and more permanent than that of the heavenly manna.

Eternal Life

The spiritual feeding provided by Christ provides one with nourishment for an eternal life rather than a finite one. Keener suggests that at the most essential level, the emphasis in the “true bread” terminology lies in the Jesus’ ability to nourish and maintain “...the life of the world to come, available in the present,”⁸³ which Morris equates with “spiritual life.”⁸⁴

“Life” is a major theme of the Fourth Gospel, and it is emphasized heavily throughout the Discourse. Jesus uses the expositional verse in 6:31 to present a striking contrast between the life given by his flesh, and that nourished by the “manna in the desert.” Throughout the Discourse, John presents a concept of eternal life on two different levels; the one who believes in Christ receives eternal life now, and he will also be resurrected on the last day (6:39, 40).⁸⁵ Though the Evangelist emphasizes life in the present, he also affirms a future of unending life for those who believe in Christ. Both references are present in verse 54: “Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον), and I will raise him up on the last day.” Upon first glance, the present tense ἔχει seems to contradict the future ἀναστήσω. However, John also allows this tension in the pericope of the raising of Lazarus; In her conversation with Jesus, Martha acknowledges, “I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day (11:24).” Upon answering

⁸³ Keener, 680.

⁸⁴ Morris, 324.

⁸⁵ Köstenberger, 212.

Martha, Jesus first appears to reference first-century Christian and Jewish eschatology of the final resurrection by saying, “He who believes, in me, even if he dies, will come to life.”⁸⁶ However, he follows this statement with an apparent contradiction: “Everyone who is alive and has faith in me will never die.” This statement describes a life of such fullness that an end to it would be uncharacteristic; its very essence requires that it continues on indefinitely because it is not subject to time.⁸⁷ This concept is echoed in 3:16, 36; 10:10,⁸⁸ and it aligns with verse 35. Those who have partaken of the true bread from heaven have all of their spiritual needs met. This is why they never die.⁸⁹

In his *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, C.H. Dodd compared John’s treatment of the “life” theme in the Fourth Gospel with that of the Old Testament Scriptures and Rabbinical tradition. He found that throughout the Fourth Gospel and in 1 John, in less than half of the appearances of ζωῆ is the term followed by αἰώνιος, though the absence does not appear to alter the meaning. The terms ζωῆ and αἰώνιος belong to the common vocabulary of early Christianity, and both find their roots in Hebrew tradition. “Life’ in the Old Testament, which normally excludes the idea of immortality, means “earthly life and well-being.” However, the data of Dodd’s study seems to show that, at the same time, ζωῆ αἰώνιος can also refer to future, unending life. As Dodd points out, ζωῆ αἰώνιος, in the LXX is only seen in Daniel 12 (חיי עולם), a book which definitely teaches of a “future life.” The term עולם does refer to an indefinite period of time, but not infinite in the

⁸⁶ C.H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (London: The Cambridge University Press, 1953), 147.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁸⁸ Keener, 680.

⁸⁹ Barrett, 297.

strictest literal sense.⁹⁰ In the Talmud חיי עולם is employed as a contrast with “temporary life.”⁹¹ The usage of this term in Daniel 12 connotes fullness of life in the present time as well as a life that does not end.

Dodd also notes a first-century teaching of two ages (the present age and the age to come) in both Rabbinic and primitive Christian doctrine. Such an idea was present in IV Ezra (A.D. 100) as well as the Book of Enoch, and it was also alluded to in Paul’s writings, the Synoptic Gospels and the Epistle to the Hebrews.⁹² It is noteworthy that the Evangelist teaches both concepts in the Fourth Gospel: pregnant, fuller life, as well as unending life.

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The Platonic notion of immortality was later adopted by Philo: “To-day is boundless and inexhaustible eternity...For periods of months and years and of time in general are notions of men, who reckon by number; but the true name of eternity is To-day.” John presents ζωὴ αἰώνιος in the same way, considering God’s existence outside of time, and therefore only relating to the present, rather than the past or future. Philo’s use of ζωὴ αἰώνιος describes eternal life that is “timeless,” rather than enduring for all time. Dodd contends that John, too, conveys in his Gospel a life that is not defined in days and years, but “...is lived in God’s eternal To-day.” In other words, the nature of eternal life

⁹⁰ Dodd, 144.

⁹¹ Ibid., 145.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

has to do with the essence of the life itself, rather than its length, but the essence of this life includes immortality.⁹⁴

The main thrust of the term “eternal life” in verse 50 at first seems literally life that continues forever: “This is the bread which comes down from heaven in order that anyone may eat of it and not die.” It is apparent from the context, given that Jesus contrasts the true Bread from heaven with the bread from Moses, which “your fathers ate and died.” The bread that actually comes from heaven, which Jesus offers, keeps one from dying.⁹⁵ However, Barrett echoes the findings of Dodd in his interpretation, concluding that the meaning is broader: “*Not dying* is equivalent to hungering and thirsting no more.”⁹⁶ This connotes a different kind of life, *in the current time*.

Keener also suggests that at the most essential level, the emphasis in the “true bread” terminology lies in the Jesus’ ability to nourish and maintain “...the life of the world to come, available in the present.” This concept is echoed in 3:16, 36; 10:10,⁹⁷ and it is consistent with verse 35; those who have partaken of the true Bread from heaven have all of their spiritual needs met. This is why they never die.⁹⁸ In verse 54 two forms of eschatology are alluded to simultaneously: eternal life in the present age, but also the hope of resurrection on the last day. Both verses 54 and 56 express eternal life as life lived in the present, in intimate dependence upon Jesus as one “remains” in Jesus, and Jesus

⁹⁴ Ibid., 150.

⁹⁵ Brown, 277.

⁹⁶ Stephen S. Kim, “The Christological and Eschatological Significance of Jesus’ Passover Signs in John 6,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164 (July-September 2007), 315-16.

⁹⁷ Keener, 680.

⁹⁸ Barrett, 297.

remains in him.⁹⁹ Though Jesus teaches some final eschatology in the Discourse, he also emphasizes an infinitely more abundant life in the present, which is communion with himself and the Father (verses 54, 56, 57).¹⁰⁰

μένω in the Discourse

John employs the term μένω more frequently than any other New Testament author, typically using the term to describe the mutual indwelling between the believer and Christ; specifically “inward, enduring personal communion.”¹⁰¹ John sometimes uses μένω to to the relationships among the members of the Trinity (1:32-33; 14:10; 15:10), as well as the abiding among Christians (5:38; 8:31; 15:4; 7; 9-10). Mutual indwelling is emphasized in not only the Gospel of John, but also several verses throughout 1 John (3:24; 4:15; 4:16). Though John describes a mutual indwelling between the believer and Christ in the phrase ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει καὶ ὡ ἐν αὐτῷ, he is not depicting a reciprocal relationship.¹⁰² Unlike the abiding among the members of the Trinity, the abiding relationship between Christ and the believer “is not [fully] reciprocal.” Abiding in Christ causes the believer to continue to be “identified with Jesus,” continue as a believer, continue in saving faith, and therefore, transformation of life. Jesus’ remaining with the believer does not involve him receiving from or trusting in them; rather, Jesus gives him “help, blessing, life, and personal presence by the Spirit (c.f. 14:23-27).”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Brown, 292.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 292.

¹⁰¹ BDAG, 504.

¹⁰² Carson, 298.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

That Jesus has the “fullness of life” of the Father in his essence is made clear in John 5:26: “for as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him the authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man.” The life Jesus possesses flows from the Father through his abiding in him, and in the same way, as the believer abides in Christ, that life is communicated to the believer (6:53). In the same way that Christ depends on the Father for life (6:56), the believer constantly depends on Christ for the life that comes from him (6:57).¹⁰⁴ This is congruent with 5:17-30 which describes Jesus’ actions as connected with those of the Father.¹⁰⁵ Partaking of Christ’s flesh “imparts within us the life that wells up from the deity.”¹⁰⁶ When one is in Christ, the life of the Father is continually imparted to the believer in the manner described John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”¹⁰⁷ The life described here is, mysteriously, “...a share in God’s own life.”¹⁰⁸

By contrasting the perfect tense “has given” (6:32; δέδωκεν) and present tense “gives,” (verses 32, 33; δίδωσιν, διδοῦς, respectively) Jesus teaches that the “Bread from heaven” is meant to be feasted on forever. Unlike the perishable manna given to the Israelite forefathers, the feeding brought by Jesus is continuous,¹⁰⁹ resulting in perpetual satisfaction. Because of this, “no room is left for spiritual hunger and thirst after receiving

¹⁰⁴ Keener, 691.

¹⁰⁵ Brown, 292.

¹⁰⁶ Bavinck, 135.

¹⁰⁷ Köstenberger, 216.

¹⁰⁸ Brown, 292.

¹⁰⁹ Morris, 322.

Christ.”¹¹⁰ The partaking of Jesus’ flesh and blood by his followers reflects the mutual indwelling of Christ with his disciples as a repeated activity. “The spring of all life continues to be his self-offering in death.”¹¹¹

Since Jesus presents himself as the Bread of Life, providing eternal life, it does not seem fitting that he would be commanding the believer to a once-for-all action. That Jesus calls the believer to simultaneously “eat and drink” and “remain” in him (6:56) implies repeated partaking. Ridderbos¹¹² and Morris¹¹³ believe that the use of the present tense participles in verses 54 and 56 indicate a repeated act. Though I agree with Ridderbos’ and Morris’ conclusion, I believe their inference goes beyond the indicative function of a present tense participle. The term μένω intrinsically suggests ongoing action; (1) “stay...live, dwell, lodge,” (often followed by εν), or to refrain from leaving a certain place. (2) figuratively describing a person who “does not leave the realm or sphere in which he finds himself,” (3) “a person or thing remains in the state in which he was found,” (4) “remain, last, continue to live.”¹¹⁴ Though initially coming to Christ is a once-for-all saving event, Jesus’ language of “abiding” suggests the believer’s continuous deliberate participation in Christ.¹¹⁵ To truly partake of Jesus is to do so continually, and as the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 324.

¹¹¹ Ridderbos, 243.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Morris, 336.

¹¹⁴ BDAG, 503-4.

¹¹⁵ Ridderbos, 243.

believer remains in Christ constantly, transformation occurs.¹¹⁶ This is why Mathison and Calvin place such high importance on the regular practice of the Lord's Supper:

In the Lord's Supper, the believer is nourished and sustained, and his communion and union with Christ is strengthened and increased. The Lord's Supper is intimately tied to the believer's ongoing sanctification and growth in grace. Those who do not regularly partake of the Lord's Supper separate themselves from their nourishment and source of life.¹¹⁷

Conclusion

The purpose and aim of this paper has been to explore possible connections between the Bread of Life Discourse of John 6 and the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Though some scholars make an effort to separate what is supposed to be the most blatantly Eucharistic section from the rest of the Discourse, I have shown that this exegetical endeavor is faulty. Throughout the course of this study, I have given reasons why the most tenable view is that the Discourse and sacrament are indirectly related. It is possible, but not confirmed, that at most Jesus would have had his future commencement of the sacrament in mind when he gave his homily at Capernaum. It is probable that the first-century church would have thought of the Lord's Supper upon reading the Discourse, and the testimony of other New Testament passages such as 1 Corinthians seems to indicate this.

The Lord's Supper and the Bread of Life Discourse illuminate truths about each other to the partaker and reader. The Discourse beautifully spells out the benefits of Christ to the one who truly comes to and believes in Him, The Supper, being both

¹¹⁶ c.f. John 15:5. Also Carson, 298.

¹¹⁷ Mathison, 276.

“...communicatory and confirmatory,”¹¹⁸ assures the believer of the reality of those benefits, as Christ is communicated to him through the Holy Spirit. I have highlighted and presented short studies on the primary blessings Christ mentions throughout the Discourse, which are imparted to the one who partakes of Christ through believing in him.

I have shown that the promises given by Christ are sealed to the believer when they receive him in faith, because God has authorized Jesus to be his mediator. The Lord’s Supper also acts as a seal. The covenantal significance of the sacrament as a meal testifies to the believer’s participation in the covenant of God as he partakes of the meal. The Supper reminds the believer that Jesus is his most genuine source of nourishment, assuring him of sustenance for eternity as well as appropriate nutriment for a deeper and fuller life in the present. It also provides the one who eats and drinks of Christ with a tangible, external action of abiding in Jesus, testifying to his remaining in the One sent by God, which is truly his source of life. As Jesus showcases these truths in his John 6 homily, he explains that each of these promises are true for the one who comes and believes in him. As one partakes of the Lord’s Supper, he is giving external expression to his “coming and believing” in Christ, and receives concrete assurance that, being covenantally connected with Christ, he is receiving, and will continue to receive, the divine benefits held forth in the Bread of Life Discourse.

¹¹⁸ Schlesinger, 363.

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